



Heywood
Community School

WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLAN OVERVIEW



Ratified November 2025

Table of Contents

Contents

Ratified November 2025	1
Table of Contents	2
RATIONALE OF POLICY	3
Organisation of the Whole School Guidance Plan	5
WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME	6
Student Support Team	9
Year Heads	9
Tutor System	9
Nurture Room	9
Guidance Counsellor	9
Chaplain	9
Heywood Community School Guidance Inclusion Policy	10
Policy on Psychometric Testing in Heywood Community School	11
1. Purpose	11
2. Scope	11
3. Policy Statement	11
4. Procedures	11
5. Roles & Responsibilities	11
6. Data Protection	11
7. Review Date	12
8. References	12
Appendix: Understanding CAT4	12
World of work	13
Improvement Plan for Guidance Counsellor	15

RATIONALE OF POLICY

Education Act, 1998 and Heywood Community School 's Mission Statement.

This School Guidance Policy reflects the ethos and spirit of Heywood Community School and it has been devised and developed in accordance with Section 9 of the Education Act 1998. Section 9(c) 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." Section 9(d) elaborates further by stating that a school "shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students in consultation with their parents having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school."

The ethos and spirit of Heywood Community School is embodied in the school's Mission Statement, which states "Heywood Community School provides an educational setting in which the person is encouraged to grow at every level – personally, academically, spiritually, socially and culturally."

DEFINITION OF GUIDANCE -WHAT IS GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN SCHOOLS?

Guidance and Counselling refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, designed to assist students in making choices about their lives and to help students in making transitions based on these choices. The Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act, 1998 identify Guidance and Counselling as a single process that "aims to help students to develop an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities, to explore possibilities and opportunities; to grow in independence and to take responsibility for themselves, to make informed choices about their lives and to follow through on those choices." (Pages 4,5) These choices may be categorized into three distinct areas: (i) Personal and Social, (ii) Educational and (iii) Career. The Department of Education's guidelines state that "counselling in schools may include personal, educational, career counselling, or combinations of these."

BACKGROUND TO POLICY

A Consultative Process

This School Guidance Policy has evolved and developed from a consultative process involving staff, students, parents, and the Board of Management of Heywood Community School. This policy is not rigid but rather it reflects the uniqueness of Heywood Community School in its own particular context and circumstances.

The development of the "Whole School Guidance plan" has been guided by models of good practice in school

guidance planning as outlined by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, the National

Centre for Guidance in Education, and the School Development Planning Initiative.

Organisation of the Whole School Guidance Plan

School Guidance Team

- **Principal:** Eamon Jackman
- **Deputy Principals:** Mary Harrington and Peter Malone
- **Guidance Counsellor:** Nicoli Reddington
- **Additional Team Members:** Afra O Malley, Sharon Webster

Guidance Counsellor Allocation

- **DES Allocation:** 28 hours
- **Actual Timetable:** 21 hours

Guidance Counsellor Weekly Timetable Breakdown

Activity	Details
Transition Year Classes	4 classes
Senior Cycle Career Classes	2–3 classes
Nurture Classes	3 classes
Care Team Meeting	1 meeting per week
1:1 Guidance & Counselling	Remainder of hours allocated to individual sessions for career guidance and personal counselling

Professional Membership & Supervision

- **IGC Membership:** Member of the Kildare branch of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors
- **Supervision:** Attends regular supervision as part of the Laois supervision group

Notes

- The Whole School Guidance Plan is collaboratively supported by the full guidance team and senior management.
- The plan integrates **educational, career, and personal/social** guidance in line with the **DES Whole School Guidance Framework**.
- The guidance counsellor works closely with staff, students, and parents to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach to student wellbeing and progression.

WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

1 st years Gam	Information Visits to Primary Schools by Principal
	Communication with parents, children and primary school principals/teachers of incoming students (by way of meetings)
	Administration of Tests for needs identification
	Induction Programme
	One to One Meetings with all 1 st years in the first term
	Monitoring of students transition from Primary to Secondary Level by way of meetings with Guidance Counsellor, Year Head and School Management
	Rapport building between Class Tutors, Year-Head and 1 st year students
	Regular informal guidance and support by all staff
	Information from Learning Support team to staff on new 1 st year students on a pastoral and academic level
	Study Skills lessons as part of Whole School Wellbeing
	Guidance/Counselling sessions as required
	Anti-Bullying Programme
	Metheal programme to help 1 st years settle
	Games room at lunchtime to encourage mixing with other 1 st years and making new friends

2 nd years	Support by way of the Class Tutor and Year-Head System
	Regular contact with Principal and Deputy Principal
	Career Guidance and/or counselling sessions as required
	Informal Guidance and support by all staff
	Study Skills class
	Online resources
	Ongoing monitoring of all students by SEN team to ensure all students are reaching their potential

3 rd years	Study Skills and Exam Techniques Presentation and Workshop(s)
	Information and Presentation on Subject and programme choice (to students by teachers and staff and to parents)
	One to One consultation on programme choice and subject choice as requested
	Support from Year-Heads and Class Tutors

	Counselling and Career Guidance Meetings as required
	Regular contact with Principal and Deputy Principal

Transition years	Personal and Student Profile
	Career Interest Assessment
	Study Skills/Time Management
	Multiple Intelligences theory
	Letters of Application and CV Preparation 4 th years
	Work Experience Preparation
	Work Experience Programme (Two Weeks blocks)
	Work Experience e portfolio
	Guest Speakers
	3rd Level/PLC/Apprenticeship Options
	One to One Guidance Interview
	Course and Career Research on Qualifax and Careers Portal and Fetch courses
	Block Career Guidance class for half of the year.
	Meeting with Guidance Counsellor re. progression and appropriate pathways
	Counselling sessions as required
	College Open Days and taster days/programmes as available
	Senior Subject Choice

5 th years	Study Skills and Exam Techniques
	Points Awareness Worksheet
	From February careers class offered
	Visiting Speakers from colleges
	Support by way of the Class Tutor and Year-Head System
	Informal guidance and support by all staff
	Support from Principal and Deputy Principal
	One to one Guidance Meeting, and counselling sessions as required

6th years	Attendance and participation at various Careers Events, such as Higher Options, Agri Career Fair, Open Days
	Visiting Speakers from colleges and professional bodies
	Vocational Guidance Interviews (one to One Meetings Between the Guidance Counsellor and Individual students)
	CAO Form - Information, and Preparation
	After school progression information night for students and parents delivered by the Guidance Counsellor

	Drop in careers classes on various subjects
	Course and Career research on careersportal.ie and various college websites as appropriate.
	Information on Sports/Other Scholarships, Student Accommodation, Budgeting at Third Level
	Career Interest Test
	Study Skills and Exam Techniques Workshop
	Accepting CAO Offers and Change of Mind Form
	UCAS - Application Process, Eunicas Application Process
	Access Programmes, HEAR & DARE
	The Third Level Grants Schemes (Susi)
	Support from Principal and Deputy Principal
	Regular contact with and support from Year-Head and Class Tutor
	Counselling sessions as required

Student Support Team

Our secondary school is committed to supporting students academically, socially, and emotionally. The Student Support Team works collaboratively to ensure every student feels safe, supported, and able to thrive. Below is an overview of the key components of our support system.

Year Heads

Year Heads play a vital role in overseeing the welfare and academic progress of students in their year group. They act as the main point of contact for parents and students, monitor attendance, and provide guidance on any issues that arise.

Tutor System

Each student is assigned a tutor who meets them every morning during assembly. Tutors build strong relationships with students, offering daily support and encouragement. Additionally, tutors conduct termly check-ins, providing students with an opportunity to express any concerns or challenges they may be facing.

Nurture Room

The Nurture Room is a safe and welcoming space for students who are struggling with school or experiencing social and emotional difficulties. Here, students receive targeted support to help them manage their emotions, build resilience, and re-engage with learning.

Guidance Counsellor

Our Guidance Counsellor provides professional support for students dealing with academic, personal, or career-related issues. They offer one-on-one counselling sessions, assist with subject choices, and help students plan for their future.

Chaplain

The Chaplain supports the spiritual and emotional well-being of students. They are available to listen, provide guidance, and assist students with any personal challenges they may encounter, fostering a sense of community and care within the school.

Heywood Community School Guidance Inclusion Policy

Heywood Community School is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where every student is supported to reach their full potential. Inclusion is at the heart of our ethos, ensuring that all students, regardless of background or ability, are treated with respect and provided with equitable opportunities to succeed.

Students Supported Under Our Inclusion Policy

The following groups of students are supported through individualized and ongoing reviews of their needs at any given stage of their educational journey:

- Students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN)
- Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Students requiring culturally sensitive guidance
- Children in care
- Refugee and displaced students
- Students from Traveller and Roma communities
- Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Students who use Irish Sign Language (ISL)

Our Approach to Inclusion

Each student is supported through an individualized plan that is regularly reviewed to reflect their evolving needs. This process involves collaboration between teachers, guidance counsellors, parents/guardians, and external agencies where necessary.

Key principles of our approach include:

- Respect for diversity and cultural sensitivity
- Continuous assessment and review of individual needs
- Collaboration with families and relevant professionals
- Provision of resources and supports tailored to each student

Commitment to Ongoing Support

Heywood Community School ensures that inclusion is not a one-time intervention but an ongoing process. We strive to create a safe, supportive, and empowering environment for all students, recognizing that their needs may change over time.

Policy on Psychometric Testing in Heywood Community School

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures and ethical guidelines for the use of psychometric testing in our school. The primary test used is the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4), in line with Department of Education circulars. The purpose is to support students academically and guide interventions when difficulties arise.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all teaching staff, guidance counsellors, and special education teams involved in administering, interpreting, and using psychometric test results.

3. Policy Statement

The school is committed to using psychometric testing ethically and responsibly. CAT4 results will be used as part of a multi-source approach to support student learning and development. No single test will be used in isolation for decision-making.

4. Procedures

- CAT4 will be administered to all incoming students in Year 1.
- Results will be interpreted by qualified staff and shared with relevant teachers to inform teaching strategies.
- Results will be discussed with parents/guardians where appropriate and used to create Student Support Plans if needed.
- Additional assessments may be used alongside CAT4 results for a holistic view of student needs.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

- Principal: Ensure compliance with Department of Education circulars.
- Guidance Counsellor: Administer CAT4 and interpret results.
- SEN Team: Use results to plan interventions for students with additional needs.
- Teachers: Incorporate insights from CAT4 into classroom strategies.

6. Data Protection

All CAT4 data will be stored securely in compliance with GDPR. Consent will be obtained from parents/guardians prior to testing. Results will only be shared with staff directly involved in supporting the student. Data will be retained according to school policy and Department guidelines.

7. Review Date

This policy will be reviewed annually or in line with updates to Department of Education circulars.

8. References

This policy is informed by Department of Education Circular 0084/2024: Advice on the Use of Assessment Instruments/tests for Guidance and for Additional/Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools. The circular emphasizes ethical administration, multi-source assessment, and compliance with data protection regulations.

Appendix: Understanding CAT4

CAT4 (Cognitive Abilities Test) is a widely used psychometric assessment designed to measure a student's reasoning abilities across four areas:

- Verbal Reasoning: Understanding and reasoning using words.
- Non-Verbal Reasoning: Solving problems using shapes and patterns.
- Quantitative Reasoning: Working with numbers and numerical concepts.
- Spatial Ability: Visualizing and manipulating shapes in space.

Purpose: CAT4 provides insight into a student's learning potential and preferred learning styles. It helps teachers tailor instruction and identify areas where support may be needed.

Interpretation: Results should be considered alongside other evidence such as classroom performance, teacher observations, and parental input. CAT4 is not a measure of achievement but of cognitive ability.

Ethical Considerations: CAT4 must be administered and interpreted by qualified staff. Results should never be used in isolation for high-stakes decisions. Consent and confidentiality are essential.

World of work

This Whole School Guidance Plan focuses on the theme 'World of Work' as part of the school's guidance programme. It aims to prepare students for future employment opportunities by developing career awareness, employability skills, and an understanding of the labour market.

Rationale

The world of work is constantly evolving, and students need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to navigate career pathways successfully. This plan aligns with the Irish Whole School Guidance Framework and supports students in making informed decisions.

Aims

- To provide students with opportunities to explore career options and pathways.
- To develop employability skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- To enhance students' understanding of the labour market and workplace expectations.

Current Provision

Currently, the school provides career guidance classes, access to CareersPortal, work experience opportunities, and guest speakers from various industries. However, there is a need to strengthen links with employers and integrate more practical career-related learning activities.

Identified Areas for Improvement

- Increase employer engagement and workplace visits.
- Expand the use of digital tools for career exploration.
- Provide targeted support for students with additional needs in career planning.

Action Plan

Objective: Strengthen students' exposure to the world of work.

Strategies: Organize career fairs, invite industry speakers, arrange workplace visits, and integrate REACH programme activities.

Responsibilities: Guidance Counsellor, TY Coordinator, Subject Teachers.

Timeline: Throughout the academic year.

Success Indicators: Increased student participation in work-related activities and positive feedback from students and employers.

Resources Required

- CareersPortal REACH Programme
- ICT resources for virtual workplace tours
- Budget for guest speakers and transport for visits.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress will be monitored through student feedback, teacher observations, and employer evaluations. The plan will be reviewed annually to ensure continuous improvement.

Transition Year Work Experience

Transition Year (TY) work experience is an integral and compulsory element of the year. It provides students with an opportunity to gain practical insights into the world of work, explore potential career paths, and develop essential skills for their future.

Benefits of TY Work Experience

- Exposure to real-world working environments and professional practices.
- Helps students make informed decisions about future careers and study options.
- Develops key skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management.
- Enhances confidence and independence by taking on responsibilities in a workplace setting.

Why TY Work Experience is Important

Work experience bridges the gap between school and the professional world. It allows students to understand workplace expectations, gain hands-on experience, and build a foundation for future employment or further education.

Structure and Requirements

- The TY work experience will be completed during two designated weeks set out by the school.
- Students must complete a consent form from their employer before starting.
- The school will provide a letter outlining expectations and an insurance letter confirming coverage for the duration of the placement.

Recording and Assessment

- Students must record their daily activities in the CareersPortal Work Experience app.
- This diary will form a significant portion of the Career Guidance module grade and contribute to the overall portfolio grade.

Participation in TY work experience is essential for developing practical skills, gaining career insights, and fulfilling academic requirements. It is a compulsory and highly valuable component of Transition Year.

Improvement Plan for Guidance Counsellor

Area 1: Getting to Know the Guidance Counsellor

Target:

Increase student awareness and familiarity with the guidance counsellor and their role.

Actions:

- Display an introduction poster in common areas (with photo, role, and services offered).
- Host short introductory sessions in each year group class.
- Share a short video or message on the school's digital platforms.

Criteria for Success:

- At least 80% of students can identify the guidance counsellor by name and role (measured via a quick survey).
- Increased student engagement (e.g., more students approaching for advice or asking questions about services).

Area 2: How to Make an Appointment with the Guidance Counsellor

Target:

Ensure students know the process for booking an appointment and feel confident doing so.

Actions:

- Create a clear step-by-step guide (poster and digital version) on how to book an appointment.
- Introduce an easy booking system (e.g., sign-up sheet outside the office or online booking form).
- Explain the process during assemblies or class visits.

Criteria for Success:

- Students can correctly describe the booking process (checked via informal feedback or survey).
- Reduction in missed or late appointments due to confusion.
- Increase in appointment requests from students who previously didn't know how to book.