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Circular Letter No. PPT 12/05

To: The Managerial Authorities of Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools.

## **GUIDANCE PROVISION IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS**

1. I am directed by the Minister for Education and Science to bring to your notice the provisions which will apply, from the beginning of the 2005/06 school year, in relation to:
  - allocation of hours for the provision of guidance in schools
  - conditions of appointment of guidance counsellors.

For the purposes of this circular, guidance in second-level schools refers to a range of learning experiences that assist students to develop self-management skills that will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. Guidance encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance. According to Section 9 of the Education Act (1998) a recognised school shall use its available resources to—

- (c) *ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.*

Guidance should be a whole school activity that is integrated into all school programmes. Each school is expected to develop a school guidance plan as part of its School Plan and this plan should include provision for supporting the needs of pupils at junior cycle. The Department asks that schools should, as far as possible, utilise the additional guidance allocation granted under this circular to focus on guidance provision at junior cycle. While the school's guidance planning should involve the guidance counsellor/s in the first instance, other members of school staff and management also have key roles to play. Parents and students must be seen as an essential part of this process. Representatives of the local community, especially local business, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Educational Welfare Board and other relevant agencies should be consulted and involved as appropriate.

## 2. Allocation of hours for the provision of guidance in schools

- 2.1 All second-level schools in the Free Education Scheme/Block Grant Scheme qualify for an allocation of hours in respect of guidance, in accordance with Schedule A below. Schools not in these schemes qualify for an allocation in accordance with Schedule B.

Schedule A	
Enrolment	Allocation (hours per week)
1000+	47
900-999	38
800-899	36
700-799	30
600-699	28
500-599	24
400-499	17
300-399	13
200-299	11
<200	8

Schedule B	
Schools with 500 or more pupils	22 hours/week
Schools in the 350-499 enrolment category	11 hours/week

- 2.2 The allocation of these hours to an individual school in any particular school year will be determined by the recognised pupil enrolment (including recognised PLC pupils) at the end of September of the preceding year.
- 2.3 Some schools may have previously been allocated posts/hours in response to particular needs and/or as part of the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI). Such posts/hours will continue to be allocated to schools for the 2005/06 school year and will be taken into account in determining a school's allocation on foot of the revised schedule. Thus a school will get the difference between its present allocation and its entitlement under the revised allocation schedule.
- 2.4 An individual school management may allocate, at its own discretion, additional hours from within normal teacher allocation to guidance.
- 2.5 Continued allocation of hours for guidance under this circular will be conditional on:
- a guidance plan being part of the School Plan which is reviewed annually by school management and staff
  - the guidance plan taking account of the context of the school and, to the extent possible, providing for the guidance needs of all students to be met through the integration of guidance into all school programmes and student support measures in the school.

### 3. Conditions of appointment of Guidance Counsellors

- 3.1 Given the broad range of activities it encompasses, guidance in addition to being a specialist area, is also a whole school activity and so will engage a range of staff members, parents and community agencies as well as the young people themselves.
- 3.2 The guidance counsellor's time will be allocated to a range of guidance activities, including work with individual students, group or class contact and other support activities. The school guidance plan should ensure that all students can avail of a developmental guidance programme. The documents *Planning the School Guidance Programme*<sup>1</sup> and *Guidelines for Second - Level Schools on the implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act (1998), relating to students' access to appropriate guidance*<sup>2</sup> should be referred to in the preparation of the school guidance plan.
- 3.3 A guidance counsellor should be a qualified second-level teacher and in addition, should hold a qualification in guidance in accordance with section 4 below.

### 4. Recognised Courses

- 4.1 The following post-graduate courses are currently recognised by the Department of Education and Science as providing a qualification acceptable for school guidance work:
- Higher Diploma in Guidance and Counselling - University College Cork (UCC)
  - Higher Diploma in School Guidance and Counselling – National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUI M)
  - Masters in Education with specialisation in Guidance and Counselling- The University of Dublin, Trinity College (TCD)
  - M. Sc. In Educational Guidance and Counselling – Mode B (TCD)
  - Post graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling - University of Limerick (UL)
- 4.2 The courses leading to the following qualifications have been discontinued. However, the qualifications continue to be recognised for guidance counsellors:
- Masters Degree in Family Counselling -Guidance and Counselling Specialisation (Marino Institute of Education)
  - Diploma in Career Guidance/ Higher Diploma in Careers Guidance - University College Dublin (UCD)
  - Diploma in Guidance and Counselling (Mater Dei Institute)
- 4.3 Other qualifications which are deemed equivalent to those listed at paragraph 4.1 above may also be recognised by the Department. Requests for recognition of qualifications should be made to Post-Primary Qualifications Section, Department of Education and Science, Cornamaddy, Athlone, at least three months in advance of the beginning of the school year in which it is intended to commence employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning the School Guidance Programme –*National Centre for Guidance in Education, 2004*

<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998), relating to students' access to appropriate guidance –*Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, 2005.*

5. You are requested to ensure that copies of this circular are provided to the appropriate representatives of parents and teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers.
6. Queries concerning this circular letter should be e-mailed to [allocations@education.gov.ie](mailto:allocations@education.gov.ie)

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A. Barrett  
Principal Officer (Acting)

Date 26 May 2005.