



Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan

One-to-One Counselling & Teaching Policy

This Policy will be implemented in tandem with, and with reference to the current MSSK Child Safeguarding Statement and the Child Protection Procedures 2025 for Post Primary Schools.

Rationale

This policy is to establish correct protocols around the provision of One-to-one counselling or teaching for students.

It is the policy of this Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan that one-to-one counselling and teaching is often in the best interest of the student. Where one-to-one sessions occur, this will take place in an open environment, i.e., staff member and student visible through a glass-panelled door.

One-to-One Counselling (Guidance Counsellor) Procedure

General

Our guidance counsellors are fully qualified guidance counsellors, members of the Teaching Council, and Garda Vetted.

The guidance counsellors are full members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and are facilitated to attend six sessions of Supervision through the IGC each academic year.

The counsellors will have a sensible regard for the students' beliefs and values. They will work in ways to promote the students' personal autonomy, freedom of choice and self-direction. The counsellors record a list of students detailing who they meet on a one-to-one basis and relevant notes regarding the sessions.

All one-to-one meetings with students take place in the counselling/guidance office where possible or as deemed appropriate by the facilitator. At the guidance counsellor's discretion, they may decide to use alternative indoor or outdoor spaces. Any concerns (Child Protection) that the counsellor has regarding the safety of a student are discussed with the Principal (Designated Liaison Person (DLP)) as a matter of urgency. If

the principal is unavailable, the issue will be discussed with the Deputy Principal (Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP)).

Responsibilities and Duties of the Counsellor

Students may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor by teachers, Senior Management, Year Heads, SEN team, parents or students can self-refer.

In the sessions the counsellor should always be mindful of:

- their role and explain the boundaries within the counsellor/student relationship
- their qualifications, areas of expertise and relevant limitations
- the nature of counselling activities involved and the reasons for undertaking them and the benefits to the student in the case of counselling
- any referral options which may benefit the student where any presenting issue is beyond the counsellor's current level of competency or would serve in the best interest and welfare of the student.
- confidentiality in the counselling process and the limits of confidentiality (i.e., if the student's safety or the safety of someone else is at risk it is discussed with the DLP).
- the students' right to engage in and withdraw from involvement in the process at any stage and take all reasonable steps to ensure that students give valid consent to proposed interventions
- consent for students to avail of counselling is sought from parents as part of the new parent induction form
- consent of the parent/ guardian is not always looked for or required. However, the Guidance Department will encourage students to open up dialogue with parents and guardians and to inform them they have linked in with the guidance counselling department. Parents and guardians are contacted by the guidance counselling department if issues of concern arise that warrant parental involvement, and this is flagged with students per the guidance department protocols.
- keeping all written records in a locked filing cabinet in the Guidance Counselling/Principal's office. When making or keeping records, care should be taken to distinguish between fact, observation, and opinion and to include only such information as is required for the purpose of professional involvement with the student. Where a decision is made, the basis for the decision is noted. Statutory and data protection responsibility with regard to records applies to all media, whether written hard copy, electronic or digitally recorded.
- to reveal information about students only with their consent, but with certain exceptions, which include where concealment would result in danger to the client or others; when required by law or designated guidelines; or for purposes of professional consultation or supervision.
- If after an initial meeting the guidance counsellor suggests a programme of intervention is necessary then consent of parents/guardians may be required if

the client is a minor, (in line with Informed Consent and Freedom of Consent section 1.3.1 ICG Code of Ethics).

One-to-One Meeting/Teaching with Students

One-to-one teaching

Provided it is deemed appropriate for an individual, one-to-one teaching may be provided. It is our preference to use small groups as this alleviates any child protection issues. Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan will weigh up the benefits of this against the possible disadvantages in relation to a child protection issue. Every effort should be made to ensure the protection of students and staff. It is crucial that clear boundaries are put in place and most one-to-one teaching will take place in the open area.

If a student needs learning or other support (e.g., therapeutic support) on a one-to-one basis, parents will be advised of arrangements in place. This will be overseen by the Additional Educational Needs Coordinator or the Asgard Class Coordinator applicable.

Where there is a need to see a student in a one-to-one situation e.g., additional educational needs support, special examination centres, tutor/year head interventions etc., the teacher must be visible at all times through an open door or a clear glass panel. Work carried out by Special Needs Assistants will also be completed in an open environment as per the students care plan.

Staff members will not detain a student alone in a classroom or in an area of the school where they may not be visible to others.

All one-to-one meetings with students take place in an open environment with a glass-panelled door. One-to-one teaching may occur between students and Additional Educational Needs teachers.

From time-to-time outside professionals may be required to meet with/assess students in a one-to-one setting. This includes visits from external agencies for example, National Council for Special Education, National Educational Psychological Service, State Examinations Commission, TUSLA - Child and Family Agency etc.

All personnel in such cases, working with students on a one-to-one basis, will be required to present identification upon entry to the school, must be Garda Vetted and parental permission must be given in advance of such visits.

Remote Teaching and One-to-One Counselling Protocols

All remote learning and counselling interactions at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan will be conducted exclusively using the school-managed Google Platform (Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Google Drive). This policy section operates in direct conjunction with the school's Mobile Phone, Internet, Chromebook/Digital device & Acceptable Use Policies

All teachers should be aware of these policies and guidelines around remote teaching and one-to-one counselling protocols.

Responsibilities and Duties of Teachers

Teachers have a responsibility to inform students of the extent and limitations of confidentiality with respect to the school's policies and safeguarding of the wellbeing of the student. Students should be informed of the limits of confidentiality where information about them may need to be shared. If issues of safety override those of confidentiality and a concern around child protection arises, the concern will be discussed with the DLP as a matter of urgency. DLP/Principal will inform parents of any child protection related issues in line with Child Protection procedures.

Record Keeping and Access to Records

All written records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the teacher's office and/or recorded on the school IT based reporting system. When making or keeping records, care should be taken to distinguish between fact, observation, and opinion and to include only such information as is required for the purpose of professional involvement with the student.

Where a decision is made, the basis for the decision is noted. Statutory and data protection responsibility with regard to records applies to all media, whether written, hard copy, electronic or digitally recorded.

For AEN students all student support files are recorded and stored in accordance with the AEN Policy.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically if required by changes in legislation or school needs.

Signed: ***Theresa Dunne***

Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Date: **10th September 2026**

Signed: ***Garrett Farrell***

Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: **10th September 2026**