



## SCHOOL COUNCIL POLICY

Draft  
Jan 07

*Our School Community provides a caring, happy and safe environment, which strives to foster a love of life-long learning.*

*We endeavour to develop each person's academic physical, moral, cultural and spiritual potential based on mutual respect, fairness and honesty.*

*We want our students to emerge as confident, adaptable, responsible and caring citizens.*

### **Scope**

- Whole school (students, parents, teachers, and management)

### **Relationship to school's mission**

- A student council is a representative structure for students only, through which they can become involved in the affairs of the school. This ties in with the school's mission statement which states that "students should emerge as confident, adaptable, responsible and caring citizens", all of this can be achieved through a well organised student council.

### **Rationale**

- The Education Act (1998) Section 27 states that Boards of Management must encourage and give all reasonable assistance to students in the formation and running of student councils.
- The National Children's Strategy states that children and young people will have a voice in matters that affect their lives and be provided with opportunities to participate in decision making
- Every child should have their voice heard, understood and responded to.
- This will enable them to become active participants in their communities.
- Developing confidence, communication skills and being happier as a result of being involved with school and student council, help children develop.
- A student council shall promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school.

### Goals/objectives

- Effective school councils should engender peer leadership, openness and awareness.
- Students involved with the council should develop essential life skills, such as listening, diplomacy, compromise and communication.
- Student councils should make a positive contribution to every aspect of a school community. They should improve academic performance, reduce bullying and vandalism and improve teacher-pupil relations.

### Policy content

#### **Setting up a school council**

The Education Act (1998) Section 27 states that Boards of Management must encourage and give all reasonable assistance to students in the formation and running of student councils. As a result in May 2006 work began on the establishment of a student council in St. Colmcilles.

#### **Election procedure**

- Elections take place in May each year so as to allow the new student council to meet from the following September.
- First year students hold their elections in early October.
- Each class group elects two class representatives
  - Class Captain
  - Vice Class Captain.
- Each student interested in representing their class at Student Council must nominate themselves on official form with two Proposers. Tutor or Year Head must validate their nomination.
- Once names have been ratified students can start their campaign, which would include an address to their class during SPHE class to outline the reasons they should be elected.
- Students will then be able to vote on official ballot paper for their chosen candidate. Tutor collects these votes and results are announced at morning assembly and badges will be handed out.

**The Student Council at work**

- Because of the broad age range it was decided to establish a junior and a senior council to more accurately reflect the concerns of each group.
- Each council will be composed of 24 Class Captains/Vice-captains.
- Meetings will be held every month.
- Internal positions will be filled only after an election. It is preferable that these positions would only be open to Third and Sixth Year students. Such positions will include:
  - Chairperson
  - Vice Chairperson
  - Secretary
- Student Council Mission Statement and Constitution will be drawn up by the council, job descriptions will also be clarified.
- A class representative must attend these meetings, any representatives who miss three consecutive meetings can be removed from the council and a replacement representative is then sought.
- Feedback from each meeting will be given to class groups during SPHE or extended registration whichever comes first.

**Agenda Setting:**

- Topics must come through class representatives and must then be submitted to the student council post box in main office a week before the meeting so as an agenda can be typed up and displayed.

**Meetings**

- Once the agenda has been set items are discussed at the monthly meeting.
- Chairperson takes responsibility for the running of the meeting.
- Minutes are recorded by the secretary and signed off at the beginning of the following meeting.
- Decisions are reached by a vote, carried by a simple majority.
- The student council facilitating teacher present at each meeting can clarify certain issues.
- Other issues are normally brought before the principal through the medium of a typed letter from the class representative who raised the issue.

**Responding to issues**

- A management committee comprised of the principal, two assistant principals and two representatives from the teaching body discuss issues brought before them by the student council and respond accordingly.
- Certain issues can be brought before the entire staff at the weekly Wednesday morning meeting.

**Roles and responsibilities****Students should:**

- Participate fully in the student council.
- Nominate suitable candidates to represent their class.
- Discuss genuine issues in a constructive manner.
- Support the work of council representatives.

**Elected class representatives should:**

- Represent their class in a mature and constructive manner.
- Attend all meetings.
- Make a genuine effort to improve the school.
- Work to become positive role models for the rest of the student body.
- Wear badges as an indication of their role as a council member.

**Parents should:**

- Encourage students to participate in the student council

**Teachers should:**

- Facilitate students in participating fully in school planning and decision making.
- Nominate two members of the management committee.

**Tutors should:**

- Encourage full class participation.
- Facilitate nominations, signing off on prospective candidates.
- Allow elections to be held during SPHE class.

Allocate time during SPHE classes and extended registration to allow council representatives to inform students of council happenings and to take items for the agenda.

**Year heads should:**

- Encourage full year participation.
- Facilitate nominations, signing off on prospective candidates.
- Award badges to council members at assembly.
- Regularly publicise student council events and initiatives.

**Special Duties Post Holder (Student Council) should:**

- Conduct annual elections- distribute ballot sheets, nominate time, count votes.
- Organise and facilitate meetings.
- Ensure attendance and proper conduct at meetings.
- Impose sanctions if representatives do not take their role seriously.
- Ensure all necessary equipment is available.
- Be available to students to discuss any queries in relation to the council.
- Organise and distribute badges and student council journals.
- To regularly review the running of the student council.

**Principal/Deputy Principal should:**

- To respond to any queries or issues brought before them by the student council.
- To encourage and promote the student council.
- To ensure that students feel they have an important and proactive role to play in the running of the school

**Success criteria**

- The success of this policy can be judged by student's involvement and attitude towards the student council. Improvements should be seen in relation to academic performance, the reduction of bullying and vandalism and an overall improvement in teacher-pupil relations.