



STUDENT COUNCIL POLICY

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, independent, responsible and caring citizens.

Scope

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

Relationship to the school's mission statement

- 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 life and the student council, helps 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. Colmcille's Community School.

Election procedure:

- Elections take place in September each year so as to allow the new student council to meet for the following academic year.
- Each class group elects two class representatives.
- Each student interested in representing their class at student council must nominate themselves on an official form with two proposers. Either the tutor or Year Head must validate their nomination.
- Once names have been ratified students can start their election campaign, which may include an address to their class during SPHE or CSPE class to outline the reasons why they should be elected.
- Students will then be able to vote on an official ballot paper for their chosen candidate.
- Tutors will collect these votes and inform the Student Council staff liaison officer of the results. The names of the new representatives will be announced by each Year Head at each assembly and the student council badges will be awarded.

The Student Council at work:

- The Student council will be composed of 50 class representatives, 2 students from each tutor class and 2 continuity members who previously served on the council. Continuity members are nominated by management and the student council staff liaison officer and their position is then ratified by the elected members at the first council meeting.
- Meetings will be held every month.
- Internal positions to the Executive Council will be filled only after an election. These positions are open to all students. Such positions will include:
 - Chairpersons (Junior and Senior)
 - Vice Chairpersons (Junior and Senior)
- 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 or assembly whichever comes first.

Agenda Setting:

- Topics for discussion must come through the class representatives and must then be submitted to the student council staff liaison officer beforehand so that an agenda can be typed up and presented at the meeting.

Meetings:

- Once the agenda has been set items are discussed at the monthly meeting.
- The chairpersons take responsibility for the running of meetings. They are aided by the staff liaison officer in this regard.
- Minutes are recorded by the staff liaison officer 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 of concern of a more serious nature are normally brought before the principal
by the staff liaison officer through the medium of a typed report.

Responding to issues:

- The executive committee requests a meeting with the principal to discuss any issues of concern they may have.
- 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 if necessary.

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- disseminate all relevant information to staff, distribute ballot sheets, collect the results and inform the staff of the full list of members on the student council for that academic year.
- 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 student council badges to the relevant Year Heads.
- To regularly review the running of the student council.
- Provide a typed report after each meeting for the principal and B.O.M.
- Manage and update the student council page on the school website.
- Assist the Executive Committee in presenting an annual report to the B.O.M at the end of the academic year.

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 pro-active 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. Student Council achievements will be published on the school website.