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# School Council Policy

September 2020



## Student Council Policy Clogher Road Community College

### **Introductory Statement**

The student council is a voice for students and an integral part of the ownership of education. This council will be responsible for representing the views, concerns and ideas for change across the whole student body.

This policy will reflect the recommendations made under Section 27 of the Education Act, 1998. The Board of Management, teachers and all staff involved with Clogher Road Community College will assist, guide and inform the Student Council. They will assist in the formation, maintenance and the yearly review of the council.

### **Scope**

CRCC Student Council is a representative body through which students in the school can make a valuable contribution and become involved in the affairs of the school. The student council will be expected to work in partnership with school management and staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students. The Student Council provides an opportunity for students to make their voice heard. The committed students also learn to develop their communication, planning and organisational skills which will be of benefit to them in their future lives. Moreover, the contribution made by a Student Council to the development of school policy in a few areas can have significant benefits for students and the school.

The timeline for the formation of the council and training is as follows:

- Class lesson to be delivered by SPHE teachers prior to the election process.
- Election process (as outlined further in this document) will take place
- Elected representatives will meet for the first time after approval of the BoM and Principal
- Elected representatives will be given a brief induction and some additional training around the role they will hold
- First official meeting of the Student Council shall be convened, where a Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary will be chosen by the council members
- Additional training will be given to the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary to better understand their role and how they will interact with the other members of the council and the BoM

### **Rationale**

This policy has been developed in conjunction with various stakeholders within Clogher Road Community College for the following reasons:

- The Student Voice is a valuable tool in the continuous improvement of a school and its culture. Active participation in the operation of the school is a valuable dimension of a student's educational experience; it provides preparation for citizenship, ethical education and fosters mature behaviour.
- The formation of a Student Council is a valuable opportunity for students to engage in partnership with teachers, school managers, parents and other staff in the operation of the school, with a view to continuous improvement. There has been research conducted indicating that student councils can improve academic standards and reduce dropout rates in schools. We hope to create a Student Council that creates a sense of ownership of the school and its activities among the student body.
  - Section 27 of the [Education Act, 1998](#) provides that students of a post-primary school may establish a student council and that boards of management shall encourage the establishment by students of a student council and shall facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to students who wish to establish a student council, and to student councils when they have been established.

- Section 27 also states that the rules for the establishment of a student council shall be drawn up by the board, school managers and staff, in accordance with such guidelines as may be issued by the Minister from time to time, and such rules may provide for the election of members and the dissolution of a student council.
- *The National Children’s Strategy*, published in 2000, emphasises the importance of student councils as a mechanism for giving young people a voice in schools.
- *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 12
- *DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion* specifies that all second-level schools participating in the School Support Programme (SSP) need to have a student council in operation to support engagement between school staff and students in the process of planning for the effective implementation of SSP measures.
- *Towards 2016 (Section 30 – Children)* includes a commitment to promote “*the establishment and operation of democratic student councils in schools, in accordance with the Education Act 1998 and the National Children’s Strategy*”.

### **Relationship to ethos of the school**

“In Clogher Road Community College every child will learn in an inclusive, democratic, co-educational setting that is committed to supporting each child to achieve their full potential while at the same time preparing them to become caring and active members of a culturally diverse society. We strive to develop a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment which will enable each member of our school community to realise their potential and reach academic excellence.”

- We aim to be an inclusive school, the student council should reflect this in how they represent their peers, whilst staff and the board embrace the agenda put forward by the council.
- Clogher Road aims to be a democratic setting for young people’s education, this will be furthered by the establishment of a Student Council.
- The Student Council could be a valuable instrument for the development of young people’s role and influence in the culturally diverse society.
- The Board of Management and all staff involved in Clogher Road Community College will strive to support the elected students in carrying out the duties during each Student Council term.

### **Goals/Objectives**

This policy is intended to support the establishment and operation of an effective student council in the school. The objectives of the student council are as follows:

- to represent the views of the students on matters of general concern to them;
- to support the management and staff in the development of the school;
- to enhance communication between students, management, staff and parents;
- to promote an environment conducive to educational and personal development;
- to promote friendship and respect among pupils;
- to contribute to the development of school policy;

- to nurture a range of important skills among students, such as participating in meetings, negotiating, responsible leadership and collaborative problem solving.

### **Key measures (content of policy)**

The key measures are:

- A. Assisting the establishment and operation of a student council**
- B. Rules for the establishment of a student council**

#### **A. Assisting the establishment and operation of a student council**

The Board of Management encourages and is obliged to assist students in the establishment of an operational student council; thus, senior management are proactive and provide leadership to assist in getting the council underway. A student council liaison teacher will be responsible for the facilitation of the student council. This teacher is the link between the student council and management and will offer support and guidance to the council once it is established. If required, training will be provided for the student council liaison teacher.

Providing information and training to student council members: It is important for the effective operation of the student council that relevant training and information is provided to its members. This could be provided by the student council liaison teacher and/or former senior members of the student council. The [Student Council Resource Pack](#) provides a useful sample training programme, divided into the following three modules:

- Module 1: Setting up a new student council.
- Module 2: Basic student council training.
- Module 3: Advanced student council training.

Minutes are kept of matters arising during council meetings and copies are issued to the principal and school management, thus a conduit of communication is always open.

The following publications will be useful in supporting student council members and in providing information to the student council liaison teacher and are made available to everyone associated with the student council.

- Student Councils: A Voice for Students–includes information and support material on the operation of student councils
- Student Council Resource Pack–includes information, support material and training modules on the operation of student councils
- Student council members may also find it helpful to have a copy of the Student Council Diary, National Children’s Office, 2006(copies are available from the Office of the Minister for Children, Hawkins House, Dublin 2, Ph: (01) 6743219). Training/information will be provided as early as possible after the establishment of the council to help them understand and fulfil their role in the school.

Other members of the school community will be informed of the work/progress of the student council by means of a dedicated notice board in the main assembly area and regular updates at Board of Management, Parents’ Association and staff meetings. Other media outlets may also be used to publicise the work of the council, e.g. newsletter, school magazine, school news in local newspapers, school website, etc.

The student council may be consulted in the development/review of school policies (e.g. on bullying, substance use, relationships and sexuality education (RSE), internet safety, school code of behaviour, uniform requirements etc.)

and in the planning and organisation of school activities and events (e.g. sporting events, concerts, mentoring programmes for younger students, school newsletter/magazine, student award ceremonies, links with other schools etc.).

School management will facilitate all meetings and activities while remaining vigilant of causing as little disruption as possible to normal class activities.

The following two publications will be useful in supporting student council members and in providing information to the student council liaison teacher:

- [Student Councils: A Voice for Students](#) - includes information and support material on the operation of student councils
- [Student Council Resource Pack](#) – includes information, support material and training modules on the operation of student councils

## **B. Rules for the establishment of a student council**

In accordance with the guidelines, the rules for the establishment of a student council will have regard to the following basic principles:

- The student council shall promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school, in co-operation with the board of management, parents and teachers.
- The council should, as far as is practicable, be representative of each class or year group in the school.
- The board of management shall always retain the right to dissolve a council or remove a council member, in accordance with these guidelines.

The Student Council of Clogher Road Community College should not through its activities interfere with, or detract from, the authority of school management or the teaching staff of the school.

It is not a function of a student council to discuss or comment on matters relating to the employment or professional affairs of the principal, teachers and other staff of the school, or to become involved in any issues that fall within their professional competence.

In accordance with the guidelines, the rules will cover the following issues:

### **1. Establishing the student council**

The Student Council will be established at the beginning of each Academic year, during the month of September.

### **2. Size and composition of the student council**

The Student council will have a representative from each core class group. The elected official will represent the class in all relevant matters.

The Council will have a member from each class from all year groups, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year. This will give us a total of 12 members, with each year group having two core groups.

Adjustments will be made if there are fewer than 2 core class groups, where there will be two elected members of the School Council to represent that year group.

Adjustments will be made if there are more than 2 core class groups, where there will be an open election across the entire year group, where two members will be elected to sit on the Student Council.

### **3. Nominations and Elections**

All students are entitled to put themselves forward for election, with the support of one nominee from their year. Each candidate will be given an opportunity to speak to his/her year group/class to express why they should be elected to the council.

This will be a 2-3-minute speech to the class, outlining why they will be the best candidate to represent them on the Student Council.

The ballots will be counted by the school leadership and results will be relayed to the Board of Management. Following this, the results will be announced during the year groups assembly, by the Principal of the school.

The Principal has the right to question a nomination for the student council if they feel that a particular student may not be a suitable representative for the school due to a record of unsatisfactory behaviour, the nominee will be given the chance to put forward a case as to why they feel they can be a good representative for their class.

All students can vote for their chosen candidate from their year by secret ballot.

Elections to be held as early as possible each school year during class time at the discretion of the principal.

Students to hold office for one year, however, to ensure continuity some members may serve a second consecutive term.

Elected student council members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings.

The student council will be guided by a student council liaison teacher and minutes and absenteeism will be duly recorded.

#### 4. First Meeting

#### 5. Constitution

The aims and objectives of the Student council are:

- to represent the views of the students on matters of general concern to them;
- to enhance communication between students, management, staff and parents;
- to promote an environment conducive to educational and personal development;
- to promote friendship and respect among pupils;
- to contribute to the development of school policy;
- to nurture a range of important skills among students, such as participating in meetings, negotiating, responsible leadership and collaborative problem solving.

There will be a total of 12 members elected across the year groups. This will consist of 2 members per year group.

The election process is as follows:

- Nomination of candidate to be submitted with the support of two members of their year group
- Candidates will then be afforded time to address their year group and give reasons as to why they will be the best representative for their voice on the council.
- The candidates will be placed on a secret ballot and votes will be cast.
- The school leadership will count the votes and inform the Board of Management as to the results.
- The Principal will announce the successful candidates at the year group assembly.

The term of office of the members will be one academic year, this will run from Autumn of the school year until the dissolution of the council in May.

There will be three officers, if required, for the academic year. These roles will be filled by council members and are as follows:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer

These roles will be voted on by the council members. A majority vote will be employed. Each council member can put their name forward for any of the roles, however the Chairperson will be chosen from senior cycle students (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> year).

Liaison teacher for the Student Council will be selected by the Principal as per the roles of the AP2 position.

The Student Council will meet once per month, the destination and time will be provided at least 1 week before the meeting is scheduled to take place.

If any extra meetings are required, the Student Council can petition the liaison teacher. This will require at least 3 members to be present to put forward the reason for the meeting.

In order to carry any decisions, the Student Council must have at least 8 members present. For all other decisions a majority vote will carry. If the Council stands divided on a decision, it will come down to the Chairperson to break the deadlock, their vote will be cast last in all votes for this reason.

If the council will be involved in fund-raising for charity or for the school, money will be managed by the treasurer and accounts must be kept. These accounts will be made available to all school leadership and must be presented to the Principal at the conclusion of all events.

If a vacancy arises during the academic year the original voting protocol will be employed in order to find a suitable candidate.

If there is to be any amendments to the Student Council Constitution, it must be carried by a unanimous vote and then presented to the Principal and the Board of Management for discussion. The Council members will be given a forum to outline why this change is recommended. The Principal, along with the Board of Management will then decide on the amendment.

If the Student Council wishes to remove a member, they must meet with the liaison teacher and Principal before bringing it to the Council. This will then be addressed by the liaison teacher and the Principal in the appropriate manner.

## 6. Removal of a Member

If elected students do not attend 3 meetings in any one year, then that student is removed from office and replaced by the nearest unsuccessful candidate from the initial elections.

Any student council member who breaches the Code of Behaviour during their term of office may be dismissed from the student council.

#### 7. Dissolution of the student council

The student council will be dissolved each May in preparation for new elections in the autumn.

#### **Links to School Policies and to Curriculum Delivery**

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Substance Use
- Child Protection
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Health and Safety
- Attendance
- Policies/plans formulated under the auspices of DEIS

#### **Ratification and Implementation**

This policy is yet to be ratified by the Board of Management.

It will be implemented by the staff of Clogher Road Community College under the direction and guidance of the Principal. Senior management and the student council liaison teacher will oversee the implementation of the policy

#### **Communication of this policy**

This policy will be distributed to all staff via their handbooks and to members of the Parents' Association and Board of Management via email. It will also be available to view online on our school website

When the finalised policy has been ratified by the board of management, it will become the school's agreed student council policy. It will then be circulated to ensure that everyone in the school community is aware of it. The entire staff, students and student council must be familiar with the policy and ready to put it into practice in accordance with the specified implementation arrangements.

#### **Implementation Date**

October 2020

#### **Reviewing and evaluating the policy**

When each student council reaches the end of their term, they will be asked to fill in an evaluation for their year. This information will be used to guide the following student council.



