

***Coláiste Bride
Secondary School***

***Student Council
Policy***

Ratified by Board of Management: 8th September 2009

Signed: _____
Secretary

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The role of the Student Council

Our Student Council is a representative structure for students only, through which they can become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students.

The role of the student council involves:

- ❖ Creating a positive school atmosphere
- ❖ Allowing students to participate more fully in the school as a consultative body, providers of information and contributors to school policy.
- ❖ Supporting and including the students views
- ❖ Creating educational opportunities for students
- ❖ Providing a better learning environment through the improvement of school conditions and facilities.
- ❖ Helping students to develop important life skills such as project and team work, problem solving, communication and leadership skills, responsibility and accountability.
- ❖ Developing a genuine partnership between the staff and students.
- ❖ Showing respect for the views of students.
- ❖ Raising awareness among the students of “bigger issues “such as poverty, environment, health and peer pressure.
- ❖ Establishing links with the local community.

Structure of the Student Council

Only students can be members of the student council.

The membership of the student council shall consist of a minimum of ten and a maximum of fifteen students. Members can be elected from second to sixth year with each year electing candidates from their own year group. The elected members will represent the school and the entire student body. First year students are represented by two of the meitheal leaders.

Election Process

The following rules apply to the election process:

- ❖ The student council is equally representative of all students in the school.
- ❖ Only students can vote.
- ❖ Each student from second year to fifth year has a vote.
- ❖ The election process is agreed and explained to all students in advance.
- ❖ All students are aware of how and when voting will take place.
- ❖ Class time will be allocated for elections where possible.
- ❖ Voting is by secret ballot.
- ❖ Counting of votes is carried out by student council members under the supervision of a teacher.
- ❖ The voting system is “first past the post”.
- ❖ Each person votes for one candidate only and the candidate with the most votes is elected.
- ❖ Elections for the council will be held each April or at a time deemed suitable by the principal.
- ❖ The term of office is for one year.

❖ No canvassing will take place during class time.

❖ Elections will be held on the following terms:

Stage One:

Each class group in the above mentioned years will vote for a student in their class.

A form for this purpose will be provided by the student council liaison teacher (SCLT).

Stage Two:

When the top students have been voted for in each class group the SCLT will present the nominations from each year group to the staff and Principal for their perusal.

The student with the most votes from each class is invited to go forward to the second stage of the election where all students from each year group will vote for the students chosen from stage one.

Stage Three:

A list of candidates will be published on the student council notice board and another voting process will take place within each year group where students will vote for their choice candidate.

The top two students in each year group who have received the highest votes will represent the students of that year group on the Student Council for the following term of office.

Activities of the Student Council

At the beginning of each school year the Student Council will publish a calendar of forthcoming events, selecting some of the below suggested activities or indeed new activities, which will indicate some specific areas they wish to become involved in for the school year.

❖ Assisting with open night / sports day.

- ❖ Organising surveys of student interests and concerns.
- ❖ Liaising with Principal, staff, Parents' Council on issues that concern students.
- ❖ Acting as an advisory body for student views.
- ❖ Promoting and organising events.
- ❖ Fund raising.
- ❖ Newsletter.
- ❖ Links with other schools and the community.
- ❖ Involvement in school planning and policies.

Student Liaison Teacher

A Staff liaison committee consisting of a minimum of three teachers will represent the views and opinions of the teaching staff at student council meetings and will act as a conduit for information between the student council and the staff. Staff liaison teachers should attend meetings; has a voice but no vote.

The main role of the student council liaison teacher is:

- ❖ To promote the interests of the student council.
- ❖ To assist and advise the council.
- ❖ To be the link between students and teachers and management.

The main responsibilities of the student liaison teacher are:

- ❖ To attend student council meetings and provide guidance and information if requested.
- ❖ Provide training and team development activities for the student council.
- ❖ Assist the council in liaising with management.
- ❖ Liaising between the student council and staff by putting student council issues on the agenda at staff meetings.
- ❖ Help raise the profile of the student council.
- ❖ Help ensure that the student council is involved in all parts of student life.

- ❖ Monitoring and evaluating the development of the student council with student members.

Student council Meetings

Meetings must take place twice a month during lunch time.

However in certain circumstances an extra meeting may be called by the SCLT.

At least one member of the staff liaison committee must be present at all meetings of the student council.

No splinter group meetings of the student council are permitted.

All council members are expected to attend all meetings.

There must be eight members present to have a meeting and ten to have a vote.

Student council members vote to choose a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary and treasurer.

Sub committees are formed by the council to facilitate the various activities organised by the council.

An agenda is set and adhered to.

Attendance is recorded and minutes are taken.

All council members get an equal say and are expected to contribute to each meeting.

All contributions to the meeting are through the chairperson.

Decisions are taken on a majority vote.

All problems discussed at meetings must be treated with discretion, respect and confidentiality.

A teacher must be present for a formal meeting to take place.

A notice of all meetings will be published on the student council notice board and the staff notice board.

Only the decisions agreed to by the principal will be published on the notice boards.

Points to note

- ❖ Discussions at student council meetings lead to recommendations not decisions. All recommendations will be presented to the Principal for approval.
- ❖ Proposals must be for the benefit of the school in general.
- ❖ The council is not allowed to meet unless one staff member is present.
- ❖ Certain areas such as definitive staff/management decisions, e.g. timetabling and other such related areas are outside the scope to the student council.
- ❖ Any staff member has the right to attend a student council meeting if he/ she so desires.
- ❖ A member of the council must be an example in dress and behaviour. Any member of the council will be removed if her behaviour or attitude is deemed to be unacceptable. This decision would be taken by the staff liaison teacher in consultation with the staff and principal with the latter having the final say

on the matter. The following are some of the reasons for removal of a representative from the council:

- If a member is suspended from school twice (first suspension gets a warning from the student council liaison teacher).
- Not taking an active part having been previously warned.
- Being late for three meetings or missing one without a valid excuse.
- A representative may also be removed at the Principal's discretion.

Communication through the Student Council

Clear lines of communication are essential to our council being effective. The student council communicates through:

- ❖ Having specific allocated time for representatives to gather student views.
- ❖ Keeping a suggestion box.
- ❖ Creating a student council email address.
- ❖ Updating the student council notice board.
- ❖ Surveying student ideas and opinions.
- ❖ Making the minutes of the meetings available.
- ❖ Inviting staff and the Principal to attend some of the student council meetings.
- ❖ Having a set appointed meeting time between the council and the Principal if required.

Resources

A designated area for the student council to meet is vital. The Parents Room or the Library if available are the preferred designated spaces.

The Board of Management shall provide a working lunch once a term to facilitate the student council members attending lunch time meetings.

The Board of Management provides funding for training, organising events, materials etc. The student council treasurer shall keep an up to date accurate account of all money raised and spent by the council and will provide a report to the council at the last council meeting of the year.

Training

Training is vital for the student council in order to provide members with the skills they need to operate effectively, manage meetings, come to an agreement on issues, organise activities, access views, represent these views and negotiate with management.

It also provides the council members with the opportunity to bond and build friendships. Therefore a dedicated training session is provided at the beginning of the new term of office of the student council. This training session takes place in the local Riverside Hotel and a full school day is allocated

The student council members also receive lunch in the hotel and the Principal is invited to attend.

The students receive training in:

- ❖ How to organise and run a meeting.
- ❖ The roles of the various committee members.
- ❖ How to be inclusive.
- ❖ How to take minutes.
- ❖ How to draw up a constitution, protocol, abstaining etc
- ❖ Good communication skills.
- ❖ Leadership skills
- ❖ Teamwork skills
- ❖ Problem solving
- ❖ Training on many other issues such as how to fundraise, carry out surveys, form an agenda, notice, keep a notice board etc

Training for Student Council Liaison Teacher

The student council liaison teacher will have access to any in-service that is offered at a local level by the Second Level Support Service or through various educational centres and also through the ASTI.

Changes to the constitution

Any proposed changes to the constitution must be voted on and agreed to in advance to voting by the BOM.

Role of the Chairperson

- The chairperson is the chief spokesperson of the student council.
- Calls meetings.
- Chairs meetings in a fair manner ensuring that all have an equal say.
- Signs any letters, notices etc that are issued by the student council.
- Liaises with the school management.
- Ensures the student council is run effectively and efficiently.
- Prepares the agenda for each meeting with the secretary.
- Signs the minutes of the previous meeting with the secretary when they are accepted by the student council.

Role of the Deputy Chairperson

- Takes over the responsibilities of the chairperson when she is not available.
- Assists the chairperson in the organisation of the student council.
- Accompanies the chairperson to meetings with management if necessary.

Role of the Secretary

- Prepares the agenda for each meeting with the chairperson in consultation with the other officers of the council.
- Distributes the agenda to all parties in advance of a meeting or at the start of a meeting.
- Takes minutes at meetings and writes them up.
- Distributes and reads out minutes from previous meetings and, on acceptance, signs them along with the chairperson.
- Sends out letters and notice of meetings that will be held, stating time and place.
- Ensures that everyone is aware that meetings are being held.

Role of the Treasurer

- Manages any funds raised by the student council.
- Keeps any money in a safe place e.g. student council bank account or the school safe.
- Keeps financial records in order and reports to the student council on the current financial status of the group.
- Provides the student council and the board of management with a complete financial report at the end of every school year.

Role of the Public Relations Officer

- Keeps students informed about the activities of the student council.
- Keeps notice board updated.
- Helps produce the student council newsletter.
- Promotes good communications between the students, student council, teachers, management and parents.

Role of Student Council Members

- Represent the views of their year at the student council.
- Puts issues that are raised by their class / year on the agenda for council meetings.
- Promotes the student council.
- Works with other members and in partnership with management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students.

