

STUDENT COUNCIL POLICY



1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Ballymakenny College has established a Student Council in fulfilment of Section 27 of the Education Act, 1998.

The Board of Management of Ballymakenny College acknowledges the valuable contribution that students can make to the effectiveness of their school and considers their meaningful involvement in the operation of the school to be a valuable part of their education process.

The Board of Management formally appoints those elected to the Student Council. The Board reserves the right to veto the appointment of an elected student to the Council if it considers such student to be incapable of serving in a manner that upholds the school's good name and tradition.

The Board of Management in compliance with principles of natural justice and fair procedure, is empowered, if it considers it necessary, to remove a member of the Council and to arrange for the dissolution of the Council.

2. Definition of a Student Council

A student council is a representative structure through which students in a post-primary school can become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management and staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students.

The policy will apply to the establishment and operation of the student council in the school.

The policy will apply to students, teachers, board of management and others involved in any way with the student council.

3. Rationale for establishing a Student Council in Ballymakenny College.

- Students have a valuable contribution to make to the effectiveness of the school and active participation in an appropriate manner in the operation of the school is a valuable dimension of a student’s educational experience; it provides preparation for citizenship and also fosters mature behaviour.
- A Student Council provides an opportunity for students to engage in a structured partnership with teachers, parents and school managers in the operation of their school.
- Student Councils can create a sense of ownership of the school and its activities among the student population.
- 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 of Management, 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 following documents further acknowledge the importance and role of Student Councils in schools.
 - *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
 - 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”.

4. Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School.

Ballymakenny College is an equality based, co-educational, child-centred, democratically run post primary school in Drogheda. Ballymakenny College is committed to the values laid down in the Educate Together Charter and the Mission Statement, Values and Principles of Louth Meath Education and Training Board. This means that all members of the school community, whatever their social, cultural or belief background, work together in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Students follow an ethical curriculum, which includes learning about different religions and belief systems. Our ethos provides a strong moral, ethical and spiritual framework for the whole school community, and informs all policies and practices in the daily life of the school. The establishment of a Student Council helps us in our aim of preparing students to live morally and ethically.

5. Aims of the Student Council Policy.

The policy is intended to support the establishment and operation of an effective student council in the school. The objectives of the student council may include:

- 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.

6. The Establishment and Operation of a Student Council

6.1 Structure of the Student Council

The council will consist of three democratically elected representative from each House. The structure of the council will be re-examined each year. This review will be undertaken to guarantee that the Student Council is a true representation of all our students. . The future structure of the council will be decided by the existing council members in consultation with the link teacher, Principal and Board of Management.

- Elections
- Elections will be democratic and by secret ballot.
- Only the students will vote in Student Council elections.
- Each student will have only one vote.
- At all levels, a separate election will be held for each House and students may only vote for candidates in their own House.
- Student will be invited to put their names forward for election and will make a presentation to their House to outline their reasons for wishing to be on the Student Council.
- Ballot papers will be produced.
- The votes will be counted by a nominated teacher/s and kept for verification.

6.2 Term of Office

Each member will serve for one academic year, from the date of election until the following June.

6.3 Officers / Activities

After the council has been formed, the entire council must elect the following officers:

- Chairperson
- Deputy Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasure/ vice-treasurer
- Public Relations Officer/s
- Evaluation Team
- Notice board Team
- Student Council Link Officer

- These positions will be appointed by nomination and discussion among members.
- The chairperson will run the meeting, adhere to the agenda and direct all comments through the chair. The Chairperson will endeavour to ensure that all council members have the chance to express their views.
- The Vice Chairperson will act in the absence of the Chairperson or Secretary.
- The Secretary will record the minutes in a designated minute book or iPad.
- The Treasurer will manage Student Council funds and report on financial affairs to a meeting.
- The PRO will publicise Student Council activities, issue press releases and make relevant intercom announcements
- Notice board Team will maintain the Student Council notice-board, updating it regularly.
- The Link officer will arrange meetings with others and will attend them along with other members of the Council.
- All members will report back to their classes on matters discussed at meetings and bring issues raised by their classmates at meetings. Small day to day announcements will be made during morning Treoir. Major announcements and news will be made during full school assemblies by the members of the student council.

6.4 Meetings

The Student Council will meet weekly, on Tuesdays at lunchtime in Room 4. A Student Council Liaison Officer will be present at all meetings. The teacher will assist in the smooth running of the meeting but in so far as is possible, students should run their affairs entirely on their own initiative.

For any major decision to be voted on or agreed, at least two thirds of the council must be present at the meeting.

6.5 Student Council Liaison Teacher

The school management will appoint a Student Council Liaison Teacher, the role of that individual is as follows;

- Attends Student Council meeting.
- Acts as a link between staff members and the council.
- Has a voice but not a vote.

- Is a source of information.
- Can take notes to complement the secretary's minutes.
- To be a support to the council when needed and to be active when called upon.
- To inform all members of relevant information (training etc.).
- To put student council issues / activities on the agenda for staff meetings.
- In the event of difficulties with the Student Council and Liaison Teacher the Principal/Deputy Principal is to be contacted.

7. Rules for the Establishment of a Student Council

7.1 Term of Office

Each member will serve for one academic year, from the date of election until the following June.

7.2 Attendance / Discipline

When a council member had advance knowledge that they cannot attend a meeting, they will inform the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson. Poor attendance on a regular basis may force the council to co-opt a replacement where necessary.

If a member misses three consecutive meetings or five in total during the year without a valid excuse, they may be asked to step down.

A code of conduct (see appendix) will be drawn up to ensure the council carry out their duties and that the council not brought into disrepute by members who seriously misbehave. Under the terms of their Student Council Contract (see appendix) members have agreed that should the behaviour of any member be in breach of the Code of Discipline, they will be given three weeks to improve their behaviour OR they may be asked to step down from the Council.

The link teacher will inform school management about this and formally let the student know about their expulsion from the student council.

8. Changes to the Constitution

Any changes to this constitution must be voted upon by the Student Council. The constitution and Members Contract will be reviewed yearly or as appropriate. At least two thirds of the council must be present at any vote.

Council Constitution was discussed and amended at the Student Council meeting on 25/9/15.

9. Links to School Policies and to Curriculum Delivery

School policies need to be consistent with one another, within the framework of the overall School Plan. Relevant school policies already in place, being developed or reviewed should be examined by reference to the student council policy and any implications which it has for them should be addressed. The Student Council will develop means for reviewing policy documents and providing feedback, within an agreed timeframe.

The following policies may be among those considered:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Substance Use
- Child Protection
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Health and Safety
- Health Promotion
- Attendance policy
- Homework policy

This list is not exhaustive and students may wish to have their voices heard in other areas of School Development. Consultation on school matters will be discussed at Board level and then relayed to the Student Council.

9.1 Links to Curriculum Delivery

The Student Council play a role in realising the principles of democracy and equality as outlined in curricular areas such as Ethics, CSPE and SPHE. Teachers will be encouraged to draw attention to the work of the Student Council when they are engaging in discussion around their areas.

10. Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

The Student Council will work and be supported by school management and the Board of Management in establishing links with the Parents Association of Ballymakenny College. The Student Council will be supported in creating a truly collaborative approach to school development.

11. Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities regarding the Student Council Policy

11.1 Implementation

The Principal on behalf of the Board of Management will co-ordinate implementation of the Student Council policy.

Ballymakenny College will appoint a Student Council Liaison Teacher. Their role will be to work closely with the Student Council in assisting them to realise their aims.

11.2 Ratification & Communication

This policy will be available to parents, teachers and the BOM and amended when consensus has been reached by all parties. The final agreed policy will be presented to the BOM, to be ratified and then circulated to all parties involved.

11.3 Implementation Date

It will be implemented in the school year beginning September 2015.

11.4 Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy

The Principal in partnership with the Student Council Liaison Teacher and in association with the school management will monitor the implementation of this policy.

12.Reviewing and Evaluating the policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated every three years under the direction of the Board of Management. This process will be co-ordinated by the Student Council Liaison Teacher and the Policy Committee, in consultation with the wider school community. On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others.

The Student Council Liaison Teacher will have the role of monitoring aspects of the policy. This policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

The following indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy, at review.

- **Student Council Evaluation Team- Self Evaluation Report.** This report may focus on some or all of the following;
 - The student council is involved in the affairs of the school
 - Students are aware of the activities of the student council
 - Principal, board of management, teachers are aware of the activities of the student council
 - The student council has achieved its goals and objectives for the year
 - Positive feedback is received from teachers, students, parents/guardians.

- **Student Council Liaison Teacher Report.** This report may focus on some or all of the areas outlined above.

- **Feedback from the Student Body** This may be sought via student survey or a focus group

The following may be considered to support the process of review and evaluation:

- a confidential survey of staff
- parent/guardian feedback, including at parent/teacher meetings
- A comment/suggestion box.