



Belmayne Educate Together Secondary School

Roll Number 68346 T

Belmayne Avenue

Belmayne

Dublin 13

Student Council Policy

Introduction

The student council policy sets out, in writing, how the board of management will assist the establishment of a student council and support the student council when it has been established. It includes the rules for the establishment of a student council, including the election of members and the dissolution of the council.

Scope

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.

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

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

Rationale

Why is it necessary to draw up a student council policy at this time? e.g.:

- 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. Research indicates that student councils can improve academic standards and reduce dropout rates in schools. 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, 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.

- Student council also allows students to have a structured input into the organisation of the school, making students feel more included.
- The student council allows students the opportunity to represent other students while respecting others opinions, it is therefore important that students feel listened to and learn to listen to others.
- *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”.*

Goals/Objectives

In precise terms, what is the policy intended to achieve?

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.

Assisting the establishment and operation of a student council

The board of management is obliged to encourage and assist students to establish a student council and to assist student councils when they have been established.

Where students notify the board of management that they wish to establish a student council, the board should provide them, in a timely manner, with the rules it has drawn up for the establishment of the council (see section B below).

Where students have not yet taken the initiative to establish a student council, the board of management, acting through the principal and teaching staff should encourage, facilitate and assist students in doing so by, for example, providing information on the role and potential benefits of a council. Management could also provide a room for students to organise the establishment of the council, or allow elections to take place in class time, where this does not seriously disrupt normal classroom work.

When a student council has been established, the board of management is obliged to facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to it. This may include the following:

- The appointment of a student council liaison teacher as a non-voting member of the student council to provide assistance to the council and to act as the link between the council and teachers and

management.

- 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.**
- Providing information about the student council to other members of the school community: The provision of information about the student council is important for students not on the student council, teachers, principal, members of the board of management and parents e.g. CSPE teachers could provide training to students on different aspects of the student council as the need arises, such as before the election of the council.
- Supporting the activities of the student council and facilitating regular communication between the student council and the school community generally.
- Involving the student council in the development 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.).
- Consulting the student council and responding in a meaningful way to the concerns of the council.

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
- Student council members may also find it helpful to have a copy of the [Student Council Diary, National Children's Office, 2006](#)

Rules for the establishment of a student council

The Education Act, 1998 provides that a board of management of a post-primary school shall draw up rules for the establishment of a student council and that these rules should be in accordance with the guidelines on student councils issued by the Minister for Education and Science, [Student Councils: A Voice for Students](#).

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 cooperation 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 at all times retain the right to dissolve a council or remove a council member, in accordance with these guidelines.

It should also be noted that the guidelines state that a student council 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 should cover the following issues:

- 1. Establishing the student council**
- 2. Size and composition of the student council**
- 3. Nominations and Elections**
- 4. First Meeting**
- 5. Constitution (sample constitutions are included in Student Councils: A Voice for Students and the Student Council Resource Pack.**
- 6. Procedure for filling a vacancy in the council**
- 7. Removal of a Member**
- 8. Dissolution of the student council**

Further information on the rules is included in Part 2 of the Guidelines.

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 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**
- **Guidance Plan**

- Statement of strategy to foster an appreciation of learning and foster regular attendance (as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000)
- Policies/plans formulated under the auspices of DEIS
- Other?

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

Specify how and when the policy will be implemented.

Name the people who have responsibility for implementing the policy and specify their roles e.g. core committee, principal, class teacher, other staff members who have specific responsibilities (e.g. student council liaison teacher), board of management/trustees, students, student council, parents/guardians, other.

The core committee could be assigned the role of coordinating the implementation of the policy.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16/06/2020

Signed: Kristina Ryan

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Point to be Discussed during next policy review :

How the vote should take place as the school grows bigger, should there be a gender balance? ie. one girl and one boy from each year group?