



Ringsend College

Student Council Policy

NOTE: This template is based primarily on [Student Councils: A Voice for Students \(2002\)](#)

Introductory Statement

The Ringsend College Board of Management Sub-Committee formally acknowledges the Student Council set up under the terms of Section 27 of The Education Act 1998 and in compliance with the guidelines published by the Department of Education and Science in 2002: “Student Councils: A Voice for Students”.

Scope

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, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students.

This policy will apply to the establishment and operation of the Student Council in the school. It will apply to students, teachers, board of management and others involved in any way with the Student Council.

Rationale

- 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 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.
- *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”.

<p>Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school (school’s mission/vision/aims)</p>
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Ringsend College is a multi-service College within the CDET B which strives to give every student every opportunity to realise their full potential.

We are committed to creating a positive and caring learning environment which motivates and challenges our students in all aspects of their personal, social, moral, sporting and academic development.

We believe that this will foster a life-long love of learning and encourage an on-going engagement with their personal development. This will enable students to leave Ringsend College as happy, socially aware, hard-working members of society with a resilient and positive mind-set.

The role of the Ringsend College Student Council is to help and assist the school community to live its mission.

Goals/Objectives

The policy is intended to support the establishment and operation of an effective Student Council in the school. The objectives of the Student Council are:

- 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

Assisting the establishment and operation of a Student Council

The Board of Management sub-committee is obliged to encourage and assist students to establish a Student Council and to assist Student Councils when they have been established.

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 (see end of document).
- Providing **information** about the Student Council to other members of the school community.
- 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.)
- Involving the Student Council 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.

Rules for the establishment of a Student Council

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 whole 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 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
6. Procedure for filling a vacancy in the council
7. Removal of a Member
8. Dissolution of the Student Council

Implementation Date

Decide upon a date from which the policy will apply.

Monitoring the implementation of the policy

The implementation of the policy should be monitored.

- Who will do what, when to confirm that the policy is being implemented?

Reviewing and evaluating the policy

Prompts

- When will the policy be reviewed with a view to amending it, if necessary?
- Identify some practical indicators which will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the policy. Examples might include the extent to which:
 - 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.
- Consider whether any of the following could support the process of review and evaluation:
 - a confidential survey of students and staff
 - feedback from the Student Council
 - comment/suggestion box.

Note: Section 5 of the [Student Council Resource Pack](#) provides information on evaluating and improving Student Councils which may be useful.

Other General Notes:

The following 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* (copies are available from the Office of the Minister for Children, Hawkins House, Dublin 2, Ph: (01) 6743219).

Training:

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.

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