



Roll No: 11894 I

Scoil Mhuire Student Council Policy

Introduction

This Student Council Policy was formulated following a teachers' meeting in November 2023, at which the establishment of a Student Council was discussed, and thereafter approved by the Board of Management. The policy was drafted with reference to *Student Councils: A Voice for Students* (2002) and in consultation with the teachers and Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire.

Scope

Definition of a student council: A student council is a representative structure through which students in a 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.

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?

- The establishment of a Student Council in Scoil Mhuire will support and promote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, e.g. Article 12 'I have the right to be listened to, and taken seriously'.

- 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.
- *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.
- *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*”.
- *Section 27 of the Education Act 1998*, provides for the establishment of Student Councils in second-level schools. The spirit of this section will be applied to the primary school context as appropriate.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school (school's mission/vision/aims)

Scoil Mhuire believes in ‘*a child-centered education where we stress that all our collective endeavors seek to support the girls in reaching their full potential.*’

We seek to empower each child to contribute their talents and skills to their local community and to society in general. The Student Council will encourage, support and scaffold pupils into using and developing their talents and skills for the benefit of the school community. The Student Council will provide a framework through which to promote and maintain a sense of fairness, mutual respect and genuine effort.

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 Scoil Mhuire. The objectives of the student council 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 in the establishment of the student council

The board of management, acting through the principal and teaching staff will encourage, facilitate and assist students in establishing a student council by, for example, providing information on the role and potential benefits of a council. Management will also provide a space for students to organise the establishment of the council, and allocate sufficient time for elections to take place, where this does not seriously disrupt normal classroom work.

When the student council has been established, the board of management will facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to it, to include the following:

- The appointment of a student council liaison teacher 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.
- 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. The liaison teachers will 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, internet safety, school code of behaviour, etc.) and in the planning and organisation of school activities and events (e.g. sporting events, concerts, fundraisers).
- 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

Underlying principles of the student council

This document establishes the rules under which the Student Council shall operate, having regard to the following principles:

- The student council will 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 group in the school.
- The board of management will at all times retain the right to dissolve a council or remove a council member, in accordance with these guidelines.
- The 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.
- It is not the function of the student council to become involved in individual complaints or disciplinary matters. Such matters are to be addressed through the agreed procedures as outlined in the Code of Behaviour.
- The student council cannot permit discussions of a personal or derogatory nature about school staff, students or others at its meetings.

If the rules under which the Student Council is to operate are amended, students will be provided with details of these amendments in a timely manner.

Rules for the student council

Size and composition

The Student Council will consist of eight student members (one from each class in the school from 1st to 6th class) and a teacher's liaison member appointed by the principal.

Nominations and elections

The principal will set a date for the election of members to the Student Council for the forthcoming academic year.

Each member will be elected for the duration of the school year only and can only serve one term during their time in Scoil Mhuire. Past student council members may act as advisors to new council members.

All students from 1st - 6th class will be entitled to stand for election to the council. Pupils may self-nominate, but will be expected to make the case for their election to their classmates.

Senior classes may run campaigns asking their fellow students to vote for them ahead of the

elections. Guidelines will be provided to nominees ahead of campaigns. Negative comments

about other candidates will not be permitted.

Voting by secret ballot will take place during class time in the school hall. The time will be agreed with class teachers in advance. The counting of votes will take place under the supervision of a member of staff of the school or of the Parents' Association or a representative of the Board of Management.

A proposed nominee who has previously been removed from the Student Council will not be eligible for re-election to it. The principal reserves the right to veto the nomination of a candidate where serious concerns exist about the capacity of that pupil to contribute effectively to the student council, or where negative campaigning has taken place.

Meetings

The first meeting of a newly formed student council will take place as soon as possible after the conclusion of elections. Thereafter, meetings take place on a monthly basis, in so far as is practicable. Additional meetings may be required at various times e.g. when organising a fundraiser. Meetings are normally held at lunch times and are facilitated by the liaison teacher.

A chairperson and secretary are appointed at the first meeting (usually the 5th and 6th class members). A formal agenda is to be prepared for each meeting by the chairperson and secretary, and the secretary records the minutes of each meeting. The minutes book of the student council is to be stored in the school.

Procedures for filling vacancies

Where a vacancy arises on the council the class group concerned should hold a further election for the election of a candidate who will serve for the remainder of the term of office of the council.

Constitution

At the first meeting of the Student Council the members will formulate a Student Council Constitution, which is in accordance with this policy and which briefly outlines, in child friendly terms, the rules under which the Student Council operates. This Constitution will be submitted to the Board of Management for approval.

The Constitution may be reviewed at the first meeting of the newly elected Student Council each year, or when an amendment is determined to be necessary in light of experience. Each reviewed Constitution is to be submitted to the Board of Management.

Removal of a member

The teacher liaison, may, with the agreement of the principal, remove any member of the Student Council for continuing failure to attend meetings without valid excuse, for a demonstrated lack of commitment to the purposes of the Student Council, for refusing to comply with the rules laid down in the Student Council Constitution or for a breach of the School Code of Behaviour such that their continued membership of the Student Council is untenable.

In cases where a majority of members of the Student Council have been removed, or where the Student Council as a body has acted in breach of its own rules, the Student Council may be

dissolved by the teacher liaison, with the agreement of the principal.

The principal and Board of Management reserve the right to ensure that the overarching concerns of the school with regard to Health and Safety, Child Protection and the School Code of Behaviour are upheld and nothing in this Student Council policy supersedes those policies.

Financial arrangements

All monies raised in a school are the responsibility of the Board of Management and all fundraising activities take place with its consent. The Student Council may liaise with the Parents' Association with regard to funding proposed activities/items etc. once the permission of the principal has been received. The Student Council will not itself hold funds.

Discussion topics and activities

Topics that come under discussion at Student Council meetings may include but are not limited to the following: school rules, behaviour and discipline, green issues, health and safety, health promotion, active school, homework, friendship/ anti bullying, lunchtime games and activities, vandalism, school uniform, fundraising, making the yard a happier place, school tours and school events.

Curricular Links

The work of the Student Council has a very strong and obvious link to the SPHE strand/strand unit 'Myself and the Wider World/Developing Citizenship', as well as to other curricular areas such as English, History, Art, and Religion.

Implementation

It is envisaged that the first Student Council will be operational in March 2024.

All in the school community have responsibility for the successful implementation of the policy, particularly the elected Student Council members, the teacher liaison member, as well as the principal, school staff and Board of Management.

Communication

The policy will be communicated to the pupils in an age-appropriate way to allow them to engage with the Council.

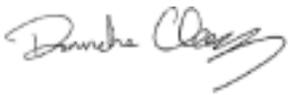
A copy of the policy will be provided to the Committee of the Parents' Association, and parents may obtain a copy on request.

Ratification, Monitoring and Review

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2024. The success of the Student Council will be reviewed at the beginning of the school year 2024/2025 and the policy amended as necessary in light of experience. Thereafter it will be reviewed every 4 years and/or as need arises.

Signed: 

Josephine Henry, Chairperson

Signed: 

Donncha Cleary, Principal

Date: 3/2/2024