

Athy Community College

Student Council Policy

Athy Community College – a County Kildare Vocational school
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School Ethos and Philosophy

Our school policy on the Student Council has been developed in the context and ethos of our co-educational, multi-denominational and multi-cultural school and with reference to our Mission Statement:

"In a caring school, we are dedicated to fostering educational excellence, empowering all students to reach their full potential-academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and co-operation, we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual"

Aims:

- The Education Act (1998) provides that a Student Council shall act "in co-operation with the Board of Management, parents and teachers" "promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school"(1)
- "provide a representative structure through which students can express their views and discuss issues of concern, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents as they undertake initiatives of benefit to the school community."
- "give students an opportunity to develop the sort of communication, planning and organisational skills which will always be of benefit to them in their future lives".

"A Student Council should not through its activities interfere with, or detract from, the authority of the school management or the teaching staff of the school.

It is, therefore, **not a function of the 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 with any issues that fall within their professional competence."(2)

Objectives:

- To elect two representatives, preferably one male and one female representative and their subs. from each class group, under the guidance of their tutor or another appointed member of staff, at the start of each school year.
- The staff will appoint two teachers' representatives and their subs.
- To inform the Parents' Association that they may appoint a representative who may attend the meetings.
- To involve the students' representatives in the development and review of school policies. "the contribution made by a Student Council to the development of school policy in a number of areas can have significant benefits for students and the school. School policies are far more likely to be successful when they are clearly understood and accepted by all partners within the school community" (3)
- To represent the views of the student body to the school management.
- To promote good communications within the school.
- To support the educational development and progress of students.
- To assist with induction and/or mentoring for new students.
- To assist in school sporting and cultural activities.
- To assist with or organise fund-raising events for charity or other. "The agreement of school management should be sought before planning any fundraising activities". (4)

Meetings.

- The meetings will be held regularly – at least once a month but preferably every two weeks or more frequently if the need arises.
- The meetings will be held at the 11a.m. break with at least one meeting a month being held 12.45 p.m. – 1.30 p.m. or 1.45 p.m. – 2.20 p.m.
- Notices re. the meetings and Agenda to be placed on the front door and the Student Council notice board at least two days before the Student Council meetings.
- The Agenda will be timed and include Any Other Business (AOB).

Guidelines for the running of successful meetings:

- Listening – one voice at a time.
- Speak through the chair if you wish to speak.
- Topics for agenda – bring up at the end of the meeting or bring to chairperson or secretary between meetings.
- Arrive on time.
- The chairperson's job is to call the meeting to order.
- Try to keep the meeting focused on the agenda.
- Select at least two people to do each task.
- At the end of each meeting, arrange a date, time, venue and possible agenda items for the next meeting.

Chairperson:

- To liaise with members of the Student Council, in particular, to meet with the Minutes secretary ahead of the meetings and agree on a timed agenda.
- To allow an opportunity at the start of the meeting for representatives to put matters on the agenda under AOB.
- To convene and chair all meetings, keeping order and ensuring each person is listened to and that everyone who wishes to speak gets an opportunity to do so.
- To start and close each meeting punctually.

Deputy Chairperson:

- To take over the duties of the chairperson if he/she is absent.

Minutes Secretary:

- To prepare an agenda for the meeting in consultation with the chairperson.
- To keep minutes of the meetings and provide copies at the meetings.
- To read the minutes of the previous meeting and make any necessary corrections before the minutes are signed by the chairperson.
- To record attendance, apologies, date, time and venue of each meeting.
- To record topics discussed, decisions made, who is to implement them and when.
- To prepare and put up notices re. forthcoming meetings – this job could be delegated.

Correspondence Secretary:

- To deal with all letters.
- To bring any correspondence received to the attention of the chairperson before the final agenda is drawn up.
- To give a brief account of correspondence received/sent since the last meeting.

Treasurers:

- Two treasurers to be appointed – at least one from the senior school.
- To collect, manage and bank any finances of the council and to keep proper accounts of any transactions in liaison with one teacher's representative.

Duties of the class representatives:

- To promote the interests and involvement of students in the affairs of the school in co-operation with the Board of Management, parents and teachers. (Ed. Act 1998).
- To co-operate with the teaching staff in helping to create a positive and co-operative learning environment.
- To encourage the involvement of their class' students in the social, sporting, academic and extra curricular activities of school life.
- To carry students' requests, ideas, proposals to the meeting by liaising with the secretary and chairperson about items for inclusion in the meeting's agenda or bring up under Any Other Business (AOB).
- To arrive on time for meetings.
- To listen carefully to what others have to say and be open to other people's opinions.
- To report back to their class after a meeting, in consultation with the class tutor.
- To do something you offer to do and report back at the next meeting.

The Board of Management of a school has an important role in supporting the establishment and ongoing development of a Student Council.

"A Board of Management in second-level schools shall encourage and help students to set up a Student Council and shall assist a Student Council when established" (5)

Assistance could involve

- Designating a teacher/teachers in the school and/or a parent to liaise with the Council on an ongoing basis.
- Providing for regular meeting between individual members of the student council and the classes they represent.

"If the value of a Student Council is to be fully realised, it will be important that the Board of Management involves the Council in the development of school policies in areas such as bullying, discipline and uniform requirements, and in the planning and organisation of school activities and events.

It is important to stress the need for a Board of Management not only to listen to the Student Council but to respond in a meaningful way to its concerns"(6).

(1) Section 27, Education Act (1998)

(2) page 9, Department of Education and Science (2002),
"Student Councils: A Voice for Students"

(3) page 8, Department of Education and Science (2002),
"Student Councils: A Voice for Students"

(4) page 33, Department of Education and Science (2002),
"Student Councils: A Voice for Students"

(5) Section 27, Education Act (1998)

(6) pages 9 and 10, Department of Education and Science (2002),
"Student Councils: A Voice for Students"