



Constitution of the Students' Council in St Joseph's Fairview

Revised February 2015



Introduction

A Student Council is a representative structure for students only, through which they 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.

Usually the student council works with a teacher, who is the link person between students and staff and management in the school. He or she attends student council meetings and provides guidance, advice and information if requested, and organizes training and team development activities and any in-services which are essential to the running of a good Student Council. This teacher also assists the students in liaising with the management.

Role of the Student Council

- To create in cooperation with the Principal, staff and students, a better school life for the student of our school.
- To represent students' views to management.
- To provide students with opportunities of leadership and to develop in all students a sense of responsibility.
- To encourage the students in the school to become more aware of how the school is run and to constructively identify and express their needs.
- To contribute to overall school development by being involved in school policy development and to be a resource in working in partnership with the management of the school.
- To act as liaison where appropriate between the students and the teaching staff and management.
- To act as a peer support group and deal with bullying.
- To be a channel of communication in the school.



Structure of the Student Council

The council consists of two democratically elected representatives of each first, second, third, TY, fifth and sixth year classes. However, subject to the advice of the Student Council Liaison teacher other students may be co-opted onto the Student Council. If an elected member of the council fails continually to attend meetings despite being continually informed he may be dismissed by the council and another student elected or co-opted for that particular class.

In selecting the Council the following general points are followed:

- Elections where there is no one unanimous candidate in any class.
- Elections will be democratic and by secret ballot.
- Only the students will vote in Student Council elections.
- Each student will have only one vote.
- Students will be invited to put their names forward for election.
- To run for the council, a student must be proposed and seconded by members of their class.
- If there is more than one candidate going forward an election will be held. If there is only one candidate they are deemed elected once they have been proposed and seconded.
- Ballot papers will be produced.
- The votes will be counted by a nominated teacher/s or Year Head and kept for verification.
- Successful candidates must sign a Contract of Compliance before becoming a full member of the Council.
- A Senior Student trains in 1st Year members.

Term of Office

Each member will serve for the duration of his time as student in the school or until he resigns from the council. In the case of all such resignations, a replacement shall be chosen from that particular class either by nomination and seconding or by election as outlined above.



Officers

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

Chairperson

Deputy Chairperson

Secretary

Deputy Secretary

Treasurer

Liaison/Communications Officer

Prefect Liaison

Green School Committee Officer

- These positions will be filled by a democratic secret ballot.
- 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 Vice Chairperson may veto the Chairperson if he believes the latter to be acting *ultra vires*. He must first get permission from the Liaison Teacher.
- The Secretary will record the minutes in a designated minute book
 - The Deputy Secretary acts in the absence of the Secretary.
- The Treasurer will manage Student Council funds and report on financial affairs to a meeting.
- The Liaison/Communications Officer works with the Secretary to deal with Public Relations to the rest of the school. He is assisted by a sub-committee consisting of the Prefect Liaison and the Green School Committee Officer.
- All members will report back to their classes on matters discussed at meetings and bring issues raised by their classmates at meetings.
- Officers may only serve in their role for one school year. These positions will be re-shuffled every September. However, they may serve in another Officer position.



Sub-Committees

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, working with the Liaison Teacher, may form sub-committees within the main council. Sub-committees meet separately from the Council but report to it at normal meetings. Active sub-committees:

- Liaison/Communications Sub-Committee (see previous section)
- Anniversary Sub-Committee - was established to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the school. Following that, it was given the remit of handling 1916 Centenary celebrations.
- Mental Health Think Tank - A forum where local schools in the area meet to discuss Mental Health.

Meetings

The Student Council will meet fortnightly (or weekly where possible) in Resource Room 1 at a time to be agreed. At least half of the total meetings must take place after school hours. The Student Council Liaison Officer will usually be present at all meetings. The teacher will assist in the smooth running of the meeting but, in as 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. The Chairperson has the casting vote in the event of a tie.

Decisions may be vetoed if both the Chairperson and Deputy chairperson are against it. (They must have permission from the Teacher/Mentor).

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



Finance and fund-raising

The student council Treasurer will keep an up-to-date and accurate account of all money raised by the council and will provide a report to the council at the last council meeting of the year. The student council will consult and co-operate with the management, staff and parents when planning fund-raising activities.

Communications

The Communications Officer will be responsible for communications to students, staff and management. A sub-committee exists to ensure that a good communications system is put in place. Regular feedback will be provided to students and regular meetings between the student council and staff and management will be arranged.

- The Council Newsletters, Notice-board and website are jointly maintained by the Secretary and Communications Officer. The notice-board is located at the school entrance near Rooms 3 and 4.

Dissolution

The board of management of the school may dissolve the student council in accordance with the rules and procedures governing dissolution. This will only happen in exceptional circumstances after consultation with all concerned. Circumstances that may require the dissolution of a student council include:

- where a significant number of members of the council have been involved in a serious breach of the school's code of behaviour;
- where serious irregularities have occurred in the election of the council;
- where the activities of the council have endangered the welfare of staff or students of the school;
- where serious financial irregularities have occurred.



Removing a member from the student council

Sometimes it may be more appropriate to remove an individual member (or members) of the council rather than dissolve the council as a whole. A member of the council can be removed by:

1. The student council for a continuing failure to attend meetings of the council, or for a lack of commitment to the purposes of the council, or for stated misconduct. This decision should be taken on a majority vote of the council and the member should be given adequate notice of the proposal, the reasons for it and the opportunity to present his or her case and to be accompanied by a colleague. They should subsequently be entitled to appeal to the board of management.
2. The board of management in accordance with the board's rules and procedures. The member concerned and the council should be given adequate notice of the proposal, the reasons for it and the opportunity to appeal the removal to the board of management or patron of the school in accordance with established local appeals procedures within the school.

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Vice-Chairperson

Treasurer

Secretary

Date: _____