

# St Vincent's Castleknock College

## Student Council Policy

### 1 Introductory Statement

The Board of Management of St Vincent's Castleknock College formally sets up the Castleknock College Student Council 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, namely 'Student Councils: A Voice for Students'.

### 2 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 and staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students. The Castleknock College Student Council will fulfil such a role.

This policy will apply to the establishment and operation of the Student Council in the College. The policy will apply to students, teachers, the Board of Management and others involved in any way with the Student Council.

### 3 Rationale

The Board of Management is setting up the Castleknock College Student Council for the following reasons:

- Students have a valuable contribution to make to the effectiveness of the College and active participation in an appropriate manner in the operation of the College 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 management in the operation of the College. 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 of Management, in accordance with such

guidelines as may be issued by the Minister for Education 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.
- The establishment of a Student Council is supportive of *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 12 .
- *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*”.

### **3 Relationship of this Policy to the Characteristic Spirit of the College**

The Mission Statement of St Vincent's Castleknock College is set out as follows:

**To have a College which is concerned with the development of the whole person in a Christian atmosphere which encourages involvement in a balance of religious, intellectual, cultural and sporting activities and which promotes the growth of self-worth and respect for others in the spirit of St Vincent de Paul.**

The philosophy of St. Vincent de Paul (1581 – 1660), the Patron Saint of Christian charity, continues to inform and inspire the students, faculty, staff and extended community of St. Vincent's Castleknock College. As a Vincentian college, it is committed to following Vincent de Paul's philosophy, which emphasises respect for the individual, service to the needy, human solidarity and adherence to the belief that self giving helps make the world a better place.

The involvement of students in an appropriate way in the wider life of the College is in the spirit of the College Mission Statement.

### **4 Objectives**

- For an effective and united system of student representation
- To act as a recognised means of communication between the members of the Council and the Management/ Staff of the College
- To promote the unity of the students through assisting clubs, societies, prefects and other students within the College

- To further improve the College as a whole thus making it a better place for all students and staff, free from any acts covered in the students rights in the Charter
- To lobby the students and the administrative Board of the College
- To have an input in the College decision-making process
- To inform all students of its activities and those of the College
- To abide by the European Students Rights Charter and the Castleknock College Mission Statement
- To provide an environment whereby a student can raise any issue or personal problem in a non-judgemental and free manner with any member of the Council

## **5 Assisting the Establishment and Operation of the Student Council**

The Board of Management encourages and assists the establishment of a Student Council and will assist it when it is established.

Among the ways in which the Board of Management will support the Student Council will be:

- Appointing 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 for members of the Student Council.
- Providing information about the Student Council to other members of the school community.
- 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.

## **6 Constitution of the Student Council**

The Education Act, 1998 provides that the 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.

## **7 Links to School Policies and to Curriculum Delivery**

### **7.1 Links to related school policies**

This policy document on the Castleknock College Student Council is one of a series of policies published by the Board of Management of St Vincent's Castleknock College. Related policies include the Code of Behaviour policy, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Substance Use Policy, the Crisis Response Policy.

### **7.2 Links to curriculum delivery**

- A Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) module has been developed on Giving Young People a Voice, incorporating student councils. This will be introduced in September 2007.

## **8 Ratification, Communication and Implementation**

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of St Vincent's Castleknock College at the meeting held on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2013

The policy shall be communicated to other members of the school community, as appropriate, including students, representatives of parents etc.

## **9 Review and Evaluation**

The policy shall be reviewed and evaluated every 3 years. The review and evaluation shall take account of the effectiveness of the Student Council as perceived by students, the Student Council Liaison Teacher, other teachers, members of the Board of Management, the Headmaster, parents/guardians. The policy should be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Minister.

Practical indicators which will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the policy 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;
- the Headmaster, the 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.