



Scoil Aireagail

Student Leadership Policy

Introduction

Scoil Aireagail endeavours to facilitate and encourage active student leadership amongst the entire student population. The development of leadership skills is recognised as an important aspect of the holistic education Scoil Aireagail strives to provide and teachers are constantly aware of developing leadership skills both in the classroom and during extra-curricular activities.

A student leadership culture is primarily promoted through three key student bodies:

1. Student Council. In accordance with Section 27 of the Education Act 1998 a student council is established with a clear and transparent set of rules to include election of members, and dissolution of the council.
2. School Prefects: A school prefect system was established in 2017/18 as a pilot scheme. The role primarily involves students mirroring the values and standards all students should aspire to. Prefects are encouraged to involve themselves in the extra-curricular, assist in the organising of key school events, be a voice for the student body and a role model for all students.
3. Cairdeas Mentoring Group: A group of sixth year students established to act as peer mentors to first year student.

Scope

Student Council

Our student council is a representative structure through which our students 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.

School Prefects

Our school prefect system is a representative structure through which our senior students can become involved in the affairs of the school, mirroring the values of respect, professionalism, maturity, co-operation and endeavour.

Cairdeas Programme

Our Cairdeas group is a representative structure through which our sixth year students can become part of the support structure in the school which aims to assist first years students with the transition to post primary school.

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/school prefect system 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 and prefects can improve academic standards and reduce dropout rates in schools. Student councils/prefects can create a sense of meaningful 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.
- *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 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 12
- *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*”.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of Scoil Aireagail (Mission Statement)

“Scoil Aireagail is committed to the educational welfare of its entire community. This includes staff, students, parents and the wider population we serve. We will respect and support the needs of staff and so enable them to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively. We will provide a holistic education in which each student is valued and their individual needs are recognised and catered for. We will provide a structured, caring environment enabling each student to reach their full potential and enter society as a responsible adult. This mission statement has been agreed by the staff, parents and Board of Management, the values driving the very existence of the school. Scoil Aireagail is aware of and intends to discharge its statutory obligations as a recognised school, particularly those set out in section 9 of the Educational Act 1998.”

Scoil Aireagail's student council, prefect body and Cairdeas programme is consistent with our above mission statement. A “*holistic education*” includes recognition and development of leadership skills. Recognition of the perspectives and opinions of the entire student body is satisfied within these policies where “*each student is valued*” as above. We aim for our students to emerge as responsible mature citizens. Our policies on student council and prefects very much foster these aspirations, making them more attainable. Our mission statement refers to an obligation where each student will “*enter society as a responsible*

adult.” Students are supported in their leadership roles through the provision of link teachers who are responsible for the specific leadership programmes and who provide regular support inputs to assist students to grow into their leadership positions. Formal training is also provided to students for the student council, prefect and Cairdeas programmes. There are link between this student leadership policy and our well-being policy, code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy.

Goals

Our Student Leadership Policy is intended to support the establishment and operation of an effective student council and prefect system in our school. The objectives of the council and prefects include:

- Representing the views of the students on matters of general concern to them
- Supporting the management and staff in the development of the school
- Enhancing communication between students, management, staff and parents
- Promoting an environment conducive to educational and personal development
- Fostering friendship and respect among pupils
- Contributing to the development of school policies
- Nurturing a range of important skills among students, such as participating in meetings, negotiating, responsible leadership and collaborative problem solving

Procedures and Processes

Student Council

The Student Council is a representative body for all the students in the in Scoil Aireagail. The Student Council consists of 2/3 or more students from every year in the school. Students are elected by their class. The council meets regularly over the course of the year. Students are provided with training regarding their roles and responsibilities as a member of the student council. These include the KCETB training day, Foroige training and Comhairle na nÓg’s AGM.

The council organise at least two fundraisers each year. One of traditional events includes the “Cheerios Childline Breakfast Morning” – usually held each October. The second event takes place during December, for example the “Wear a Christmas Jumper Day”. In previous years’ it was a bake sale. Money has been raised for charities such as Pieta House, the Children’s Hospital, Crumlin and Temple Street Children’s Hospital. The council meets the Principal at least once a year to bring up issues that have arisen at meetings and to make representations on behalf of students in the school. In 2022 the Student Council made a presentation to the BOM informing the board of their role, activities achievements. The Student Council finish up the year with a trip to Dail Eireann to see how the government works and meet local representatives.

School Prefects

Three key roles:

1. Prefect as a student leader and mentor
2. Prefect as an example to other students
3. Prefect as an ambassador for the school

1. Prefect as a student leader

Prefects are expected to become involved in some extra-curricular activities.

Prefects are expected to assist members of staff in the organisation of student activities.

Prefects take a particular role in leading the induction of first year students. They may be asked to represent students in highlighting to school management any issues that students feel are important.

2. Prefect as an example to other students

Prefects will demonstrate high standards in areas such as general behavior and respect, academic focus, work ethic, positive attitude, endeavor to reach one's potential, classwork, homework, uniform compliance, service to the school and extra-curricular involvement. They are required to set a positive example to other students.

They are also expected to make every effort to see that other students maintain the school's good name. Prefects will help promote a positive and safe school environment.

3. Prefect as an ambassador for the school

Prefects may be asked to represent the student body at formal school occasions. They may be asked to introduce guests to our school and thank them for their contribution.

Specific Duties

1. Managing the mentoring of first year students
 - Assist leading teacher in preparation and execution of first year mentoring session
2. Setting standards
 - Ensuring their full school uniform is worn at all times
 - Ensuring they respect school rules/code of behavior
 - Consistently striving to reach his/her potential by engaging in learning and extra-curricular
3. Attendance at school events
 - Contributing to Start-of-Year ceremony
 - Addressing school community in events such as 6th Year Graduation
 - Welcoming school visitors etc.
4. Representing students
 - Prefects may bring to the attention of school management any issue which they feel is important to students
 - Prefects should liaise with members of the Student Council, to identify and agree on any issue which is felt is important to students, and communicate same to school management

Selection of Prefects

1. Four students in total will act as prefects; two from 5th Year (boy & girl) and two from 6th Year (boy & girl)
2. The positions will last for one school year
3. At the beginning of the school year the Prefect system will be explained to all 5th and 6th Years
4. Those interested will complete an application form
5. Candidates will attend a short interview
6. Prefects will receive training on the role of prefect, and leadership generally
7. Prefects will be asked to wear the Scoil Aireagail Prefect Badge at all times, attached to their school uniform jumper
8. All students will be briefed on the roles of Prefects

Cairdeas Programme

Translating as 'Friendship' as Gaeilge, Cairdeas is a peer mentoring programme run in Scoil Aireagail whereby 6th-year students mentor and assist 1st-year students transition and settle into Secondary School. Approaching the end of each academic year, our Leaving Cert students are approached about the Cairdeas Programme, the training as well responsibilities involved. Students then express their interest and are selected based on this. Training is provided to students by Ossary Youth Group to prepare them to Mentor 1st year students from their first day of school and throughout the year. The mentors meet regularly with these students, checking in on them and thus relaying any issues of concern to staff if necessary. They also work with students in groups on various activities, challenges, and games.