

Carrick Primary School School Council Policy



March 2024

Carrick Primary School

Vision Statement

Forward Together: “Ar aghaidh le chéile”.

Mission Statement

As a Rights Respecting School, we aim to provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment to realise and celebrate the academic and non-academic potential of all our pupils. We expect our pupils to work hard and encourage parents to assist us in helping children to learn and to become lifelong learners.

Aims of Carrick Primary School

We aim to:

- develop and strengthen each pupil’s understanding and love of Catholic values by promoting the Catholic ethos throughout the school;
- create a safe, enjoyable learning environment, in which effective learning is facilitated and quality teaching is provided;
- implement all aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- help our pupils to develop a positive attitude towards life and a love of learning;
- value, respect and nurture every child in our care;
- encourage pupils to respect themselves and others and to support and care for one another;
- equip our children with the necessary life skills to enable them to participate in a fast changing society;
- endorse the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child and work towards the implementation of policies and practices which reflect the Convention;
- involve the parents, Board of Governors and wider community in the life of the school and in the holistic development of the children in our care.

Carrick Council

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 12 of the Convention recognises that children have the right to express their opinions and have those opinions taken into account in any matter affecting their lives.

We, the staff of Carrick Primary School, endorse the Convention on the Rights of the Child and are working towards the implementation of policies and practices which reflect the Convention. Our aim is to develop a culture which respects the views of both adults and children. We agree with Fisher (2002) who stated:

“If we want to have evidence of what a child knows and understands then we must collect the richest and most powerful evidence available – the child’s own words” (Fisher, 2002).

By establishing and developing Carrick Council, we believe that we are providing our pupils with the opportunity to exert a contributory influence upon their school experiences. It is our way of creating a context which facilitates equal interaction between staff and children.

“School Councils are democratically elected groups of students who represent their peers and enable pupils to become partners in their own education, making a positive contribution to the school environment and ethos” (www.schoolcouncils.org).

Our School Council’s Motto is:

“YOUR VOICE WILL BE HEARD”

Introduction

- This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for Carrick Council at Carrick Primary School.

Aims and Objectives

- To provide opportunity for pupils to become partners in their own education and to make a positive contribution to the school environment and ethos.
- To develop and promote children's self-confidence and social skills.
- To encourage children to behave responsibly towards everyone.
- To develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of how to contribute to society as a whole and what it means to be an active citizen.
- To develop pupils' recognition of themselves as worthwhile individuals, with a right to be heard.
- To allow children to have a 'voice' and to share their opinions and ideas with others.
- To allow children to become more responsible and actively involved in the decision – making process of the school.
- To develop important life skills which promote self-esteem, self-awareness, communication skills, relationship skills and assertiveness.
- To provide children with opportunities to help with planning, implementing and evaluating the Rights Respecting School Project.

Organisation and Management of our School Council

Council Meetings

- Council meetings are held every month or sooner if required.
- The meetings are held by the Council Link Teacher/Classroom Assistant together with the Council representatives and other members of staff e.g. Principal/Leadership Team/Governors (when appropriate).
- The agenda for meetings will be drawn up by the Council Representatives/Coordinator.
- Opportunities for the children to raise items will also be provided.
- The Council Representative/Coordinator will take notes about issues/ideas discussed in class and bring them to the next Council meeting.
- After each Council meeting, the selected Councillor will report back to the class on the issues discussed and the action taken.

Council Meeting Organisation

- Timetable of regular meetings within teaching time rather than during play time.
- The meetings are run and led by the pupils (Council representatives).
- Each P7 Council Representative takes on a designated role or job on the School Council.

Chairperson –Leads meetings and helps set the agenda.

Vice Chairperson - Ensures that all Council Representatives carry out their roles effectively. Sets the agenda - together with the Chairperson and the Link Teacher/Classroom Assistant. The Vice will also run the meeting in the Chairperson's absence.

Secretary –Takes the minutes of each meeting. These are word-processed using the format provided.

Treasurer- Works together with the Co-ordinators/ Principal in managing the School Council's budget.

Running the Council

- The agenda for each Council Meeting will be drawn up by the Link Teachers/Classroom Assistant together with the Chair and Vice Chairperson.
- At each Council meeting there will be opportunities for all Council Representatives to discuss other ideas raised by the pupils in their class.
- A copy of the agenda will be provided for every Council Representative for them to follow during the meeting.
- Minutes of each meeting will be recorded and retained in A40 in Public.

Choosing the Representatives

- During the first few weeks of the Autumn Term, P4-7 teachers will discuss with their classes the role of the Council.
- All children should be supported to decide whether they would like to stand as class representative and be made aware of what this role entails. Brainstorming what makes "effective" Council representatives is an effective way to get children to think about the qualities needed for such a role.
- Pupils will be asked to prepare and deliver a short speech to the rest of their class (e.g. stating why they should be chosen)
- A secret ballot will be held, where the pupils will be given the opportunity to vote, and children will be elected as Council representatives.
- Pupils elected will serve for one year.

The First Council Meeting

- The first Council meeting will take place as soon as possible in the school year.
- It will be chaired by the Council Chairperson and pupils will be given opportunities to learn about the procedures of these meetings, minutes, designated roles, turn taking, discussions etc.
- External help/support will be accessed from outside agencies when required.
- Photographs of the Council representatives will be taken and displayed on the Council Notice Board.

- Photographs of the Councillors will also be displayed in each class and in prominent positions throughout the school.
- Badges will be distributed to the Councillors at a special assembly and the Council Representatives are asked to always wear their badges.
- The new Council will introduce themselves at both Key Stage assemblies and will also be involved in School Assemblies.
- All Council events and developments are recorded in a 'Council Records' book which will be maintained and retained by the Vice Principal/Principal/Coordinator.

We, in Carrick Primary School, believe that Carrick Council can contribute to positive changes in the life of every child in the school. All pupils can develop their listening and discussion skills as the processes are practised across the curriculum. We believe that involving pupils in real issues through the Council helps them to develop important life skills. We believe that when children can contribute their views, and know that these will be listened to and valued, they are less likely to seek attention in other less appropriate ways.

Conclusion

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required, in consultation with the pupils, staff, parents and Governors.

Signed: Dr Anne Cassidy (Principal)

Signed: Mr Gerard Murdock (Chairperson of Board of Governors)

Date: March 2024

Review Date: March 2027