

# Constitution of Cork Educate Together Secondary School Parents Council

Next Review: October 2017

## Terms of Reference

*“Parents” in this document refers to all (1) parents, (2) guardians, and (3) full time carers of students attending Cork Educate Together Secondary School.*

*The full name of the school is “Cork Educate Together Secondary School” abbreviated as “CETSS”.*

*The full name of the body is “Cork Educate Together Secondary School Parents Council” abbreviated as “CETSS PC”.*

## 1. Foundations

- 1.1. In accordance with the *Educate Together Charter (2015, Appendix 1)*, the CETSS PC is founded on the premise that parents “are entitled to participate actively in decisions that affect the education of their children,” and seeks to support the Educate Together objective that all Educate Together schools be “democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.” Educate Together promotes “a partnership approach between teachers as professional educators and parents as the primary educators of their children.” The founding of the CETSS PC thus reflects our rights and responsibilities as parents to actively engage in the education and development of our children and the school.
- 1.2. All parents, guardians, and full-time carers of students enrolled at CETSS are automatically members of the CETSS PC, which is an affiliate body of the *National Parents Council (Appendix 2)*.
- 1.3. Operating in accordance with the provisions of the *Education Act (1998, Appendix 3)*, the CETSS PC provides a structure for parents to collaborate with the CETSS Students Council, the CETSS Staff Council, the CETSS Board of Management, and the CETSS principal and staff, in order to collectively create a safe, positive, and caring environment that promotes learning and nurtures the ethical, moral, personal, social, cultural, intellectual, and physical development of the child, whilst maintaining high educational standards and supporting the ethos, mission, and values of CETSS at all times.

- 1.4. The CETSS PC is responsible for promoting and advocating on behalf of all students and parents on issues that affect the whole school (i.e. individual students issues should be dealt with through standard procedures and processes set out by the school). The specific goals, responsibilities, structures, and activities of the CETSS PC are described in the remaining sections of this constitution.
- 1.5. This constitution is to be reviewed and ratified annually by the CETSS PC.

## 2. Goals of the Parents Council

- 2.1. To foster an inclusive and positive CETSS parents community.
- 2.2. To supplement the direct communication mechanisms between the school and parents, and to keep parents informed of relevant issues, policies, activities and events in the school and in the broader educational environment.
- 2.3. To advise and inform the CETSS community, by supporting discussion and deliberation and representing the collective views of parents on school policies and related matters.
- 2.4. To promote the welfare and interests of all CETSS students and parents, informed by the Educate Together ethos, mission and values.
- 2.5. To support the work of CETSS students and staff and to foster positive working relationships between all stakeholders.
- 2.6. To enrich the experience of all members of the CETSS community, particularly students and parents, through a range of activities.
- 2.7. To communicate the collective views of the parents to the Student Council, Staff Council, Board of Management, Principal/Staff, and other relevant parties.

## 3. Parents Council Operational Committee

- 3.1. The affairs of the CETSS PC shall be supported by an elected group of members known as the Operational Committee.
- 3.2. The fixed posts for the Operational Committee are:
  - i. Facilitator and Co-Facilitator
  - ii. Secretary and Co-Secretary
  - iii. Treasurer and Co-Treasurer
- 3.3. See Appendix 3 for description of posts.
- 3.4. The nomination and election of the members of the Operational Committee shall take place at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Parents Council (which is the first meeting of the new school year).
- 3.5. The regular term of office for members of the Operational Committee is one year.
- 3.6. Vacancies arising during the academic year (e.g. due to resignation) can be filled by nomination and election at regular Parents Council meetings.

- 3.7. The Operational Committee will hold a minimum of 6 meetings during the school year for planning purposes and dealing with administrative matters arising.

## 4. Meetings of the Parents Council

### 4.1. Regular Meetings

- 4.1.1. Regular Parents Council meetings will take place monthly during term time.
- 4.1.2. Meeting dates/times/venues will be scheduled by the Operational Committee and communicated to parents with sufficient advanced notice.
- 4.1.3. Meeting announcements will include an agenda and any supporting information required.
- 4.1.4. Decisions made at a Parents Council meeting are made by majority vote of those in attendance.
- 4.1.5. For voting purposes, a quorum of 10 parents is required in the academic year 16/17, and 20 parents in the academic year 17/18.
- 4.1.6. Parents are invited to suggest items for meetings' agenda to the operational committee
- 4.1.7. Standing items on meeting agenda include
  - i. Confirmation of the previous minutes
  - ii. Reports from working groups
  - iii. Fund raising
  - iv. Notice of the next meeting

### 4.2. Annual General Meetings (AGM)

- 4.2.1. The Annual General Meeting shall be held at the start of each academic year and no later than the 31st of October.
- 4.2.2. Notice shall be given to all CETSS PC members 10 working days in advance of the AGM.
- 4.2.3. The AGM shall be chaired by the Facilitator, or, in their absence, by the Co-Facilitator. In the absence of both, the Operational Committee shall select one of its members to chair the meeting.
- 4.2.4. The quorum for an AGM shall be 15 Parents Council members.
- 4.2.5. The business of the AGM shall include:
  - i. Noting attendance and apologies
  - ii. Agreeing minutes of the previous AGM
  - iii. Facilitator's report
  - iv. Treasurer's report
  - v. Election of Committee
- 4.2.6. Parents are invited to suggest items for meetings' agenda to the operational committee

### 4.3. Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM)

- 4.3.1. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Parents Council may be called:
  - i. By request of the current Operational Committee

- ii. At the written request of the at least 10 parents during the first academic year 16/17 and by 20 parents in subsequent academic years.
- 4.3.2. All EGM's shall be scheduled to take place within term time.
- 4.3.3. Notice shall be given to all CETSS PC members 10 working days in advance of the EGM.
- 4.3.4. The EGM shall be chaired by the Facilitator, or, in their absence, by the Co-Facilitator. In the absence of both, the Operational Committee shall select one of its members to chair the meeting.
- 4.3.5. The quorum for an EGM shall be 15 Parents Council members.
- 4.4. Amendments to the CETSS PC constitution may be made at any AGM or EGM meeting, provided the parents are notified of the amendments no later than 10 days prior to the meeting, and they are passed by a two-thirds majority vote at that meeting.

## 5. Working Groups

- 5.1. The Parents Council may establish working groups to address specific needs identified through the meetings, or through other communication with members.
- 5.2. The working groups can make decisions specific to their role but are at all times accountable to the operational committee.
- 5.3. Of particular interest are working groups regarding:
  - 5.3.1. The development of an ongoing, inclusive, comprehensive parent involvement action plan.
  - 5.3.2. The creation of a warm, welcome setting for the whole CETSS community, in cooperation with school staff.
  - 5.3.3. The organisation of family activities.
  - 5.3.4. The development of a parent education programme (e.g. on issues such as bullying, the safe use of media, textbooks and computer-assisted learning, study skills, training to facilitate parents in working with teachers, and so on).
  - 5.3.5. The promotion of parent-teacher communication regarding the curriculum and how parents can support their children's learning.
  - 5.3.6. The application of parents' expertise and skills to create learning experiences in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities (subject to Child Welfare guidelines).
  - 5.3.7. The organisation of fundraising activities.

## 6. Scope

- 6.1. The Parents Council, along with the Student Council, Staff Council, and Board of Management, constitutes one of the bodies within the *CETSS Consultation and Decision Making Structure*.

- 6.2. The Parents Council is exclusively concerned with issues that affect the whole school, and will not have the power to deal with individual issues, concerns, or complaints.
- 6.3. Where there is an issue, concern, or complaint that affects an individual student or parent, such issues must be dealt with through standard procedures and processes set out by the school.
- 6.4. The Parents Council may formally advise on, request, or challenge the policies and processes set out by the school. The Council will do that by presenting a motion at a Council meeting for debate and deliberation. Motions supported by a two-thirds majority of parents in attendance will be formally communicated to the other bodies within the *CETSS Consultation and Decision Making Structure* through agreed upon mechanisms.
- 6.5. In addition to activities initiated by the Parents Council, the Council will engage in activities requested by the Principal, Board of Management, Student Council, and Staff Council, where it chooses, including the election of Parents Representatives to the Board of Management.

## 7. Finances

- 7.1. Finances raised through Parents Council fundraising may be used:
  - 7.1.1. For the purpose of supporting the school community based on requests from the Principal, Board of Management, Student Council, and/or Staff Council.
  - 7.1.2. For the Parents Council to manage and carry out their own activities to further the aims of the Parents Council.

## Appendix 1 Educate Together Charter (2015, Appendix 1)

See [https://www.educatetogether.ie/sites/default/files/educate\\_together\\_charter\\_2015.pdf](https://www.educatetogether.ie/sites/default/files/educate_together_charter_2015.pdf)

## Appendix 2 Extract from Education Act (1998)

26. – (1) The parents of students of a recognised school may establish, and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for that school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of students of that school.

(2) A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, Principal, teachers and students of a school and for that purpose may-

(a) advise the Principal or the board on any matter relating to the school and the principal or board, as the case may be, shall have regard to any such advice, and

(b) adopt a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents, in consultation with the Principal, in the operation of the school..

(3) The board shall promote contact between the school, parents of students in that school and the community and shall facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to parents

who wish to establish a parents' association and to a parents' association when it is established.

(4) (a) A parents' association shall, following consultation with its members, make rules governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs.

(b) Where a parents' association is affiliated to a national association of parents, the rules referred to in *paragraph (a)* shall be in accordance with guidelines issued by that national association of parents with the concurrence of the Minister.

## Appendix 3 The Roles of Operational Committee

### 1. Facilitator/Co-Facilitator

- a. Ensures that the formal activity of Parents Council conforms with its constitution.
- b. Prepares the agenda for the meetings (with the Secretary/Co-Secretary).
- c. Chairs all meetings and moderates on all discussions to ensure all attendees are afforded an equal opportunity to contribute to the business of the meeting.
- d. Invite parents to suggest items for meetings' agenda to the operational committee
- e. Presents the Facilitator's report at the AGM.
- f. Ensures that the work of the committee is shared and reviewed.
- g. Helps the committee to have clear vision and goals.
- h. Represents the Parents Council at any formal occasion or nominates someone in their place if needed.
- i. Signs the minutes of the previous meeting when approved by the committee as a record of the business and decisions of that meeting.

### 2. Secretary and Co-Secretary

- a. Records the minutes of meetings including matters arising.
- b. Helps the facilitator/co-facilitator prepare the annual report for the AGM.
- c. Notifies committee members of forthcoming meetings and forwards minutes of the last meeting and the agenda for the next meeting.
- d. Coordinates help for Parents Council activities.
- e. Prepares the agenda for meetings (with the facilitator/co-facilitator).
- f. Ensures an attendance record of all attendees is completed for all committee meetings.
- g. Notes the creation and disbanding of working groups, their purpose, and members.

### 3. Treasurer

- a. Keeps an accurate record of money received and disbursed by the committee.
- b. Liaises with the school financial officer regarding all financial aspects of the PC.
- c. Presents the Treasurer's report to the AGM.