

St Columba's College

Stranorlar



School Plan 2023 – 2028

(Revised May 2024)

Introduction

This document falls into two parts.

Part 1 makes reference to all the policies and procedures that govern the way the school operates and cares for all members of its community. These policies have all been ratified by the school's Board of Management (BOM) on an ongoing basis following consideration by the different stakeholder groups – students, parents and staff. Many policies have also been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the CEIST Trustees. A number of policies are formally reviewed every year at the request of the BOM.

Part 2 has school self-evaluation as its primary focus. This section recognises that the school must systematically examine its practices, procedures and performance to ensure that the best possible provision can be made for all stakeholders within the context of the resources at the school's disposal. It involves considerable consultation with students, parents and staff to obtain feedback on how the school is perceived to be performing. This feedback in turn will shape the scope and nature of school policies as set out in section one of the school plan. A key component of self-evaluation will be the building up of quantifiable data to act as a bedrock for well-informed decision-making.

The development of the school plan is a shared responsibility of students, parents, staff and BOM. Within this school, the driving force for this task is the School Development/Self Evaluation Committee. This group meets on a regular basis and its primary brief is to discuss and draft documents for consideration by the stakeholder groups. The feedback from stakeholder groups is then taken into account before a final document is submitted by the group to the BOM for decision.

The School Development/Self Evaluation Committee is assisted by the work of the Principal, Deputy Principals and two post holders (AP I and AP II) who share the following specific responsibilities relating to educational matters:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of national developments in relation to educational matters – teaching, learning, assessment, evaluation, curriculum, access and provision, DES circulars and DES inspection reports
- To actively liaise with all school partners – staff, students, parents and Board of Management - to ensure that they are made aware of national developments in education and to facilitate discussion thereof
- To engage in academic research to assist in the school's educational development and to provide all necessary quantitative tools for this purpose
- To work with the Senior Management Team to review, update and implement all school policies and procedures
- To work with the Principal in leading all school partners, particularly subject departments, through an ongoing, thorough and meaningful self-evaluation process so as to maximise the teaching and learning outcomes for all, with particular reference to the following:
 - Continuing Implementation of School Self-Evaluation 2016-2020 - DES Circular 0040/2016
 - School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 Post-Primary - DES Inspectorate
 - Looking at Our School 2022 A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools - DES Inspectorate

- To observe and report on best practice in other educational environments, both domestic and international
- To fulfil all responsibilities in accordance with the ethos and traditions of the Mercy Order and a CEIST school

Part 1 – Policies and Procedures

Brief History

Up until the foundation of the Finn College in 1925 by the late Thomas Logue, B.A., post primary education in the Finn Valley area was for the very fortunate few. The old Finn College was located in the upstairs portion of the old Market House on Main Street, Ballybofey from 1925 to 1968.

In 1968 the school was taken over by the Raphoe Diocesan Authority and placed in charge of the Mercy Sisters with Sr. Carmel as its first Principal. The 'Finn', as it was affectionately known and as it was originally constituted, closed in September of that year. The original policy of co-education and inter-denomination was continued but the name was changed to St. Columba's College. With the introduction of free secondary education from 1968, it soon became clear that a new school building was required. A site for the new college was donated by the Butt Hall committee and building commenced at pace. By the end of 1969 the students had moved to the new campus on Drumboe Avenue. The first building of the new school was officially opened on 30th April 1970 with eight teachers and sixty nine students.

Many developments have taken place in the intervening years. In 1983, an extension consisting of 38 classrooms was officially opened. By this stage the college had 784 students and 42 teachers. Further developments to the college facilities were to follow including new classroom extensions in 1996 and 2011, development of our canteen facilities from 1990 and the development of two sports pitches in 2009 and 2018. We received planning permission for a major extension and refurbishment of the college in August 2022 which will further enhance the facilities in the college. The project includes the provision of 6 Science labs, 4 Construction/Engineering Rooms, 2 Art Rooms, 2 Home Economic Rooms, 2 Computer/Multi Media labs, A Multi-Purpose Hall and Fitness Suite, a Library, a Special Needs base (two classrooms with additional accommodation), a number of general classrooms, offices, and external hardcourt play areas. It is hoped that this major development will go to tender and work will commence in 2025.

We are very grateful to the Stranorlar Parish Committee for the use of the old St. Mary's National School as temporary accommodation until 2026 when the major development was due to be completed.

We celebrate over 50 years of success and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of staff, patron (CEIST), students, parents and the wider community who have made this possible.

Enrolment trends

St. Columba's College has 938 students, 71 teaching staff, 10 Additional Needs Assistants (SNA's) and 23 ancillary staff for the 2023-2024 academic year. During the lifetime of this School Plan. it is anticipated that the school population will grow as follows 2023-2028.

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
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938	955	991	995	1005
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The demographic profile of the Finn Valley is changing. The number of students in the primary schools in the catchment area have grown over the last number of years. The numbers have been augmented with the arrival of students from the Ukraine and International Protection Applicants.

Mission Statement

St. Columba's College, a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School, was founded by the Mercy Order and now is under the trusteeship of Catholic Education An Irish School's Trust (CEIST) and is committed to 'The pursuit of excellence in a caring environment.' The college strives to promote the moral, spiritual, academic, social and personal development of all students.

Characteristic Spirit and Ethos

Inspired by the vision of Catherine Mc Auley, Mercy education is committed to the holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed by the teachings of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere guided by the core values of CEIST.

CEIST Charter – Core Values

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development

We believe a knowledge of, and a personal relationship with, Jesus Christ give meaning and purpose to our lives.

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning

We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Showing Respect for Every Person

We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.

Creating Community – Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.

Being Just and Responsible – We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships.

Organisation

The College Trustees, CEIST, are the legal owners of the school who determine the purpose of the school it's aspirations. St. Columba's College is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School i and is committed to the pursuit of excellence in a caring environment.

The Board of Management is appointed by the College Trustees. It consists of four nominees of the trustees, two nominees of the parents (selected by the parent body) and two nominees

of the teaching staff. The Board serves for a three-year term. The Chairman of the Board is appointed by the trustees and the Principal is the ex-officio Secretary of the Board. It is entrusted by the Trustees to look after the conduct, management, and financial administration of the school in accordance with the school ethos.

The members of the Board of Management are:

Chairperson: PJ Mc Gowan

Trustee Nominees: Georgina O'Brien, Joey O'Leary, Daireen Laverty

Parent Nominees: Cora Harvey, Noel Doherty

Teacher Nominees: Brendan O'Donoghue, Ann Marie Wade

The Parents' Association consists of parents of students and meets on a regular basis, with the Principal and Deputy Principals in attendance. At these meetings, issues of concern to the parents are brought to the Principal's attention and he in turn informs them of developments in the school, including policy development. The Parents' Council are also involved in a number of fundraising activities.

The Student Council

The Student Council comprises of students from all years. Sixth Year students form the Council executive – Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. Each year in May, elections take place in for the following year.

Senior Prefects

The senior prefects, led by the head boy and head girl, assist with many school activities. They meet with the senior prefect committee.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care in St Columba's College is rooted in the belief that all of the teachers in our school make up the team of people who deal with the lives of the students on a daily basis and are therefore the pastoral care team of the school.

In addition to subject teachers, each class has a Class Tutor and a Year Head. Class teachers meet with their classes four mornings per week from 9 to 9.05 am. Students can approach their Class Tutor with any issue, worry or problem, which may arise during the course of the school year. Year Heads speak to the students within their allocated year on a daily basis and monitor the students' attendance, behaviour and academic performance. The Class Teachers work closely with the Year Heads.

Student Support Team

The Student Support Team meet on a weekly basis and discuss required for those students must in need of support. The Student Support Team consists of a Deputy Principal (Chair), Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Coordinator. Student may be referred to the Student Support Team by a member of staff who outlines the reason for the referral. This may be a concern over academic performance/engagement or a pastoral care issue.

Child Safeguarding Statement

In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Addendum to Children First (2019), the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements, the Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department’s Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. Tom Rowan (Principal)

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) is Ms. Georgina White (Deputy Principal)

Senior Management Team (SMT)

The Senior Management consists of the following:

Principal: Mr. Tom Rowan

Deputy Principals: Mr. John Sweeney, Ms. Georgina White and Ms. Amanda Timony.

Middle Management Team

The college has been allocated a middle management team of 9 Assistant Principal I (AP I) positions and 10 Assistant Principal II (AP II) position. This allocation is aligned with the school enrolment. The college has also a Programme Coordinator with overall responsibility for Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

The list of Assistant Principal I and Assistant Principal II roles and responsibilities include:

Level	Roles and Responsibility Summary
AP I	Year Head (1 st Year)
AP I	Year Head (2 nd Year)
AP I	Year Head 3 rd Year)
AP I	Year Head (Transition Year)
AP I	Year Head (5 th Year)
AP I	Year Head (6 th Year)

AP I	Co-ordinator of Digital Learning
AP I	School Curriculum Development with particular responsibility for New Junior Cycle Framework
AP I	School Development Planning with particular responsibility for coordinating the Student Wellbeing Plan
Programme Coordinator	Overall responsibility for Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
AP II	Student Punctuality Procedures and Recording Minutes of Staff/Planning Meetings
AP II	Health and Safety Coordinator
AP II	Evening Study Co-Ordinator and Staff Welfare
AP II	State Examination Secretary
AP II	Additional Educational Needs (Admin)
AP II	Lunchtime Detention Co-ordinator and Administrator of student lockers
AP II	Development of Book Rental Scheme
AP II	Student Voice and Leadership Coordinator
AP II	Coordinator of School Self Evaluation and School Improvement Plan
AP II	Coordinating the collection, storage and submission of LC and JC Practical Coursework

List of Teaching Staff

The following is a list of teaching staff in the 2023-24 school year:

Mr. T. Rowan (P)	Ms. C. McNulty	Ms. C. Howard
Mr. J. Sweeney (DP)	Ms. C. Conneely	Ms. M. Mc Colgan
Ms. G. White (DP)	Mr. M. Mc Ginley	Mr. K. Byrne
Ms. A. Timony (DP)	Ms. R. Cunningham	Ms. L. Gorman
Ms. J. Gately	Ms. J. McMullin	Mr. S. Harley
Ms. E. Cooke	Mr. K. Mc Glinchey	Ms. A. Cowan
Ms. C. Breslin	Ms. G. Kelly	Ms. C. McLaughlin
Ms. E. Sproule	Ms. N. Roache	Mr. J. Atcheson
Mr. B. McCrea	Ms. N. Harris	Ms. C. Boyle
Ms. C. Mc Hugh	Ms. S. Harkin Diver	Ms. L. Hartin
Ms. H. O’Gorman	Ms. A. O’Malley	Ms. A. M. Wade
Ms. L. Neilson	Ms. U. McDaid	Ms. B. Harley
Ms. C. Cooke	Mr. S. Mc Ginty	Ms. P. Harkin
Ms. M. Rodgers	Mr. S. Ward	Mr. J. Maguire
Ms. L. Culkin	Ms. M. Duignan	Ms. E. Mc Govern
Ms. D. Mac Grory	Mr. J. Flood	Ms. K. Diver

Ms. M. McGrath	Mr. B. O'Donoghue	Ms. A. Murray
Ms. L. Mc Gill	Mr. C. Griffin	Ms. L. Hayes
Ms. A. J. Kingston	Mr. D. Mc Daid	Mr. J. Rodriguez
Ms. R. Mc Hugh	Ms. L. Lawne	Ms. S. Regan
Mr. M. Cannon	Mr. M. Gavigan	Ms. D. Bonner
Mr. O. Mc Menamin	Mr. J. Donnellan	Ms. C. Rose
Ms. C. Coulter	Ms. N. Mahon	Ms. E. Gamble
Ms. S. Diver	Ms. M. Holmes	

Curricular Provision

General points

- It is school policy not to stream classes in 1st year. The Principal assigns students to mixed ability classes based on subject option and gender balance
- Students choose their subject options on enrolment but get an opportunity to move to a different optional subjects up to six weeks in their 1st Year.
- After 1st year, classes in Irish and Maths will be divided in accordance with the levels taken by students i.e. higher or ordinary. Classes in all other subjects, including English, will be of mixed ability.
- The greatest possible level of choice is given to students when selecting optional subjects for 1st and 5th years in that subject groupings are not pre-determined by the school but emerge following an annual consultation process aimed at satisfying the greatest number of students.
- Students may avail of Supervised Study for 1.5 to 2 hours after school each day from Monday to Friday.
- School management and the teaching staff also keep under review the desirability and possibility of introducing new subjects to the school's curriculum, subject to the provision and funding by the DES of all necessary resources.

The college provides the following programmes of education for its students:

1. The Junior Cycle Programme (3 years)
2. The Junior Cycle Schools Programme
3. The Transition Year Programme (Optional - 1 year)
4. The Leaving Certificate Programme (2 years) (Established)
5. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – optional as part of the Leaving Certificate programme
6. The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme

This overall provision is organised as follows:

1. Junior Cycle Programme (3 Years)

The following core subjects are taken by all students:

1. Irish (except those who meet the criteria for an exemption)
2. English
3. Maths
4. History
5. Geography
6. Science
7. Physical Education
8. Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)
9. Social, Personal and Health Education (including Relationships and Sexuality)
10. Religious Education
11. Digital Media Literacy

Students also select either French or German or Spanish or a non language option (see options below)

In addition, students also select any 2 of the following optional subjects:

- Visual Art
- Business Studies
- Engineering
- Graphics
- Home Economics
- Music
- Wood Technology

Students sit exams in nine subjects for their Junior Cycle as well as completing two short course (PE and Digital Media Literacy). Students are issued their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement which capture learning experiences in Wellbeing subjects and 'Other Areas of Learning'.

2. Junior School Completion Programme (JCSP)

The Junior Certificate Schools Programme is available in 2nd Year to those who opt into it. The JCSP class will normally have approximately 12 to 15 students in it. This necessitates some movement between base classes in 2nd year. This programme is designed to help students who may otherwise struggle in a large class situation. More time is available to the teacher for one to one help than would be the case in a larger class.

Students following this programme sit the same Junior Cycle examinations as other JC students with one exception – Geography is removed from the curriculum.

There is an opportunity for parents and students to meet with the JCSP Co-ordinator during the 1st Year Parent/Teacher to discuss a place in the programme.

The class will be processed before the end of the 1st year in preparation for 2nd year.

3. Transition Year

This is a specially devised programme of study for students who have completed their Junior Cycle education. This optional one-year educational programme offers the potential for the holistic development of young people as flexible learners, active citizens and future workers. It is an interdisciplinary programme with an emphasis on personal development, social awareness and increased social competence.

Students taking this option are given the chance to follow a school-developed course of study without the pressure of State examinations.

Core subjects include:

- English
- Irish
- Maths
- European Language
- Science

Students can sample a range of other subjects:

- Development Education
- Art & Crafts
- Sciences
- Construction Studies
- DCG
- Engineering
- Business Studies & Accounts
- History
- Geography
- Creative Cookery
- Physical Education, Sports Leadership & Future Leaders
- Enterprise Education
- European Studies
- Music & Theatre Production
- IT-Microsoft Office Specialist
- Guidance

A number of activities specific to Transition Year include:

- First Aid Certificate & Exam
- Gaisce The President's Award
- Model United Nations & Euroscola
- LYIT Coding Workshop
- 'Street Law' Programme

4. The Leaving Certificate Programme (Established)

All students take the following subjects to examination level:

- Irish (except those who meet the criteria for an exemption)
- English
- Maths

They then select four of the following, also to examination level:

Accounting	Computer Science	German
Agricultural Science	Construction Studies	History
Applied Maths	DCG	Home Economics
Art	Economics	Music
Biology	Engineering	Physical Education
Business	French	Physics
Chemistry	Geography	Spanish

5. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – optional as part of the Leaving Certificate programme

An option available to students at this level is to undertake the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) as a full school subject. Spread over two years, the LCVP combines the academic strengths of the established Leaving Certificate with a new and dynamic focus on enterprise, the world of work, information technology and languages. It promotes the skills and qualities of self-reliance, innovation and enterprise in an integrated programme that will prove relevant to the lives of students on leaving school for further education, for employment and for self-employment.

Further details are available from the school's Programme Co-ordinator and from our website.

6. Leaving Certificate Applied

The LCA programme, introduced in September 1995, is a two-year programme. It is aimed at students who wish to follow a practical Leaving Certificate aimed at preparing them for the world of work and adult life. The programme is nationally recognised and provides an alternative pathway to further education.

Work experience is a key part of LCA – students attend work placements each Tuesday.

Further details are available from the school's Programme Co-ordinator and our website.

Curricular planning and co-ordination

Teachers of each subject area form themselves into departments. Each subject department appoints a Subject Coordinator each September who works in a voluntary capacity to fulfil the following responsibilities:

- To act as a contact person for that subject department

- To act as a spokesperson for that department
- To convene meetings of subject departments
- To keep records of subject department meetings

Departments meet formally three times per year in accordance with a schedule set out in the school calendar. The purpose of these meetings is several-fold:

- To eliminate the possibility of professional isolation that may be felt by individual subject teachers
- To foster professional dialogue, debate and reflection
- To plan for the changing and increasing demands on schools
- To discuss resource requirements
- To discuss timetabling matters 24
- To decide on booklists
- To evaluate the quality of and approach to teaching, learning and assessment
- To advise on student allocations
- To empower subject teachers as educators and decision-makers
- To develop a sense of co-operation and collaboration
- To assist in the delivery of school policies at classroom level

As well as working on a department basis, the following areas of the curriculum each have a specific Coordinator who works closely with staff and management in the development of the particular area: The Principal and Deputy Principals maintain close contact with all departments and co-ordinators and seeks to support teachers in every possible way in the discharge of their professional duties. This is done by holding meetings with all subject departments on a rolling basis throughout the school year. All subject departments have a detailed written plan that is updated annually and kept under ongoing review and development.

Information Technology (IT) / Digital Media Literacy

The school has appointed an Assistant Principal I with the following responsibilities:

- Maintenance and Development of IT Hardware and Software
 - In co-operation with external IT service providers, school management and staff:
 - Ensuring that all IT equipment is in good working condition
 - Maintaining an asset register of all IT equipment owned by the school
 - Developing and maintaining a process for the systematic replacement of IT equipment in line with prescribed procurement procedures, school requirements and budgetary resources
- Teaching and Learning
 - Organisation of continuous professional development for teachers in how best to implement the potential of IT in the classroom, especially in relation to E-portfolios

- Researching of best IT practice in other schools and the dissemination of same to the teaching and administrative staff
- Ensuring that all students are properly set up on Office 365 and are aware of its educational advantages and potential
- Managing of all student IT accounts in co-operation
- Creating an awareness of and ensuring compliance with all copyright requirements
- Ensuring that all students and staff are aware of the school's IT Acceptable Use Policy and collecting and maintaining records of all signed documents in relation to same

St Columba's recognises the huge importance of ICT in our world today and particularly within the field of education. The college continues to review and update its Digital Learning Plan. The college will implement three main initiatives over the coming years:

- Acquire and promote the use of wireless enabled devices for teaching and learning in classrooms.
- Upgrade the computer suites and staff IT equipment.
- Provide CPD training to staff on new hardware and software solutions.

Extra-curricular activity

The school is very committed to the development of the full range of each student's talents and aptitudes. To this end, a wide selection of activities outside the regular school timetable is offered, including:

Debating (English)hockey

Basketball

Athletics

Soccer

Gaelic Football

Camogie

Hurling

Rugby

Chess

Darts

Lunchtime Games Club

Maths Quiz Teams

Science Quiz Teams

Business Quiz Teams

Educational tour to a European city

School musical

Field trips
Theatre trips
Young Entrepreneurs competition
Green School Committee
School of Sanctuary

The school is greatly indebted to teachers who give so generously of their time and expertise in the promotion of these activities on a voluntary basis. The help and encouragement of members of the local community also facilitates the development of these activities and is, once again, deeply appreciated by the college.

Religious Education

The Religious Education (RE) Policy in St. Columba's College is based on the aims and vision contained in the School's policy document. Religious Education in the school is grounded on the principle of offering a Catholic Education to all students. In accordance with the school's aims, Religious Education strives to promote the moral, spiritual, academic, social and personal development of the students.

Complementing the aims of the school's own policy document, the rationale for the Religious Education curriculum aims to facilitate the holistic development of the person whilst promoting the 'personal growth and spiritual development of the students.'

The policy of Religious Education in this school includes the following:

- In accordance with the CEIST guidelines, we are committed to providing a minimum of two hours of Religious Education to all classes
- In accordance with the stated aims of the Department of Education and Skills Junior Cycle Religious Education specifications, Religious Education in this school, whilst promoting a Catholic ethos, will be offered to students of all faiths and none.
- It is the policy of this school that the Religious Education Department will co-operate with the local curate in organising liturgical events for the school year. It is envisaged that these will be cross-curricular events.
- It is also the policy of this school that all students will be strongly encouraged to participate in school liturgical events.
- The Religious Education Department will encourage the students to develop an awareness of the work of charitable organisations.
- It is part of the vision of this school that the study of Religious Education would act as a link between parish, school and home.
- 3rd, 5th and 6th Years will be given the opportunity to attend retreats and will be organised in accordance with the wishes and needs of students.
- It is the policy of this school that all Religious Education teachers be suitably qualified, insofar as is possible, to teach all RE classes
- The Religious Education Department will be adequately resourced each year and Religious Education teachers will be facilitated to attend in-service courses.

- The Oratory is a sacred space reserved for religious activities, both individual and communal, within the school.

St. Columba's College Organisational Policies

The college has developed a range of policies and procedures. See below a list of these policies and their review dates:

NAME OF POLICY	DATE AND STATUS	DATE OF NEXT REVIEW
Code of Behaviour	Reviewed September 2023	September 2024
Admissions Policy	Reviewed December 2023	Review in October 2024
Anti-Bullying Policy	Reviewed May 2023	September 2024
Guidance Plan	Reviewed in November 2023	November 2024
Child Safeguarding Policy	February 2024	February 2025
Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy	June 2023	Review in 2025
SPHE Policy/Plan	June 2023	May 2025
Additional Needs Policy	Sept 2019	May 2024
Attendance Policy (SSE)	Oct 2019	For review
Homework Policy (SSE)	Oct 2018	For review
Smoke-Free Workplace Policy	Oct 2019	For review – check folder
Dignity in Workplace	Reviewed in November 2023	September 2025
Acceptable Usage Policy	December 2020	September 2024
Digital Learning Plan	Reviewed Dec 2021	September 2024
Staff ICT Policy	Apr 2017	May 2019 (WiFi)
Overseas Tours Policy & Ed Trips / Sports Trips	May 2017	March 2019
Data Protection Policy	May 2019	Under review
Critical Incident Policy	Sept 2021	November 2023
Safety Statement	April 2018	May 2019
Health and Safety (Covid 19)	Oct 2020	December 2021
Attendance Strategy Statement (SSE)	Nov 2019	For review
CCTV and Security Policy	May 2018	For review
Wellbeing Policy(SSE)	February 2022	September 2024
Administration of Medicines	Dec 2020	Dec 2021

Substance Use Policy	Reviewed February 2023	February 2025
Job Sharing Policy	Jan 2019	
Student Teacher Placement Policy	February 2019	January 2022
Student Council	Under development	
Grievance, Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures	As per Union agreement	Distributed to all staff
Literacy Policy	Under development	
Working Post Retirement – Ancillary	June 2020	September 2024
Sustainability Policy	February 2023	February 2025
Assessment Policy	February 2022	Under review
Vetting Policy	March 2023	March 2025
Communications Policy	December 2020	
One to One Teaching / Tuition	February 2021	

Links with the local community

St. Columba's College is proud of the excellent links that it has forged with the local community in both the twin town and the entire Finn Valley area in so many different ways:

- Local businesses provide work experience opportunities every year for TY, LCA and LCVP students.
- Members of the local community frequently visit the school to give talks/lectures on different careers and specialist topics, to assist with enterprise activities for TY students
- Local sports clubs provide facilities for training and match/competition venues
- Local businesses are supportive of the school in facilitating visits by student
- Local businesses and groups frequently support the school by way of sponsorship and contributing to occasional fund-raising activities.
- Stranorlar parish very generously facilitates the use by the school of their church for the Open Mass of the school year (Mercy Day) and the Christmas Carol Service. The local curate also celebrates the 1st Year Mass, Mass for the Faithful Departed and the LC Graduation Mass.

The college is also committed to playing its part in the enhancement of the local community in the following ways:

- School facilities have been rented out to local soccer and gaelic club as well as the County U6 Ladies GAA team

- Students and staff are active fundraisers for and participants in many local and national charities e.g. the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Cunamh, Irish Cancer Society, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Crumlin Children's Hospital, Make A Wish Foundation, Mary's Meals and Multiple Sclerosis Ireland to name but a few
- The school's purchasing policy is to source as many as possible of its supplies and requirements i.e. printing, stationery, furniture and fittings, from suppliers in the locality as long as such suppliers are financially competitive and provide an acceptable service. The college is also obliged to adhere to the terms of public procurement as set out by the FSSU.
- St. Columba's College is also committed to maintaining good relations with all other primary and post-primary schools.

Part 2 – Areas for development and school improvement

The current Board of Management (October 2022 to October 2025) have identified a number of areas of school improvement and development over the next number of years and will be updated on an annual basis.

1. Teaching and Learning

Improvement in Teaching, Learning and Assessment will be addressed under two processes as follows:

- A. School Self Evaluation
- B. TL 21 Programme

2. Building & Plant Development

3. Staffing and School Leadership

4. Further develop effective methods of communication with all stakeholders

1. Teaching and Learning

A. School Self Evaluation

School self-evaluation (SSE) is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review whereby The Principal, Deputy Principal and teachers in consultation with The Board of Management, parents and students engage in reflective enquiry on the work of the school. School self-evaluation involves reflecting on the school's aims, considering criteria for success within the school's context, and determining appropriate methods for judging the quality of educational provision in the school. It is an evidence-based process which involves gathering evidence from a range of sources to make judgements about the work of the school with a view to bringing about improvements in its students' learning. It requires a school to address the following key questions with regard to an aspect or aspects of its work:

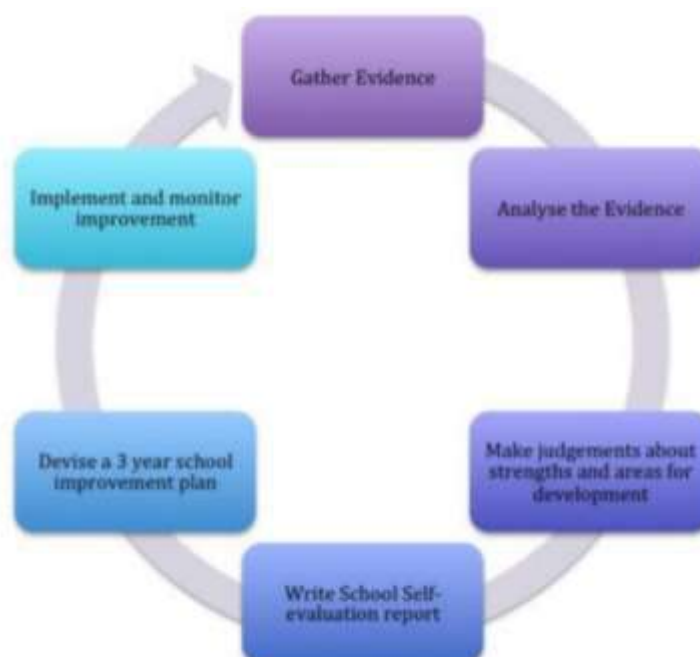
- How well are we doing?
- How do we know? What evidence do we have?
- How can we find out more?
- What are our strengths?
- What are our areas for improvement?
- How can we improve?

The key principles of school self-evaluation are outlined below:

Collaborative, inclusive	Effective school self-evaluation involves Principals, Deputy Principals, teachers and boards working together in a climate of trust and respect, in consultation with parents and students, to bring about school improvement.
Leadership	Effective school self-evaluation requires effective leadership.
Reflective	Effective school self-evaluation involves schools thinking critically about the aims and priorities of the school and what needs to be done to bring about improvements in their students' learning.
Evidence based	Decisions taken during effective school self-evaluation are based on sound, reliable and specific information or evidence.
Flexible	Flexibility, creativity and a willingness to rethink, revise and redesign ways of doing things on the part of teachers, Principals, Deputy Principals and school managers are features of effective school self-evaluation.
Continual, ongoing	Each step of effective school self-evaluation is part of an ongoing cycle focused on improving the work of the school and the learning of the students. Evaluation findings inform school improvement plans and strategies for improvement, the impact and effect of which are in turn evaluated.
Improves teaching	Effective school self-evaluation is focused on making a positive, measurable and significant difference to the quality of teaching in the school.
Improves students' learning	Effective school self-evaluation is focused on making a positive, measurable and significant difference to the learning of the students and the work of the school.
Communication	Effective school self-evaluation provides the school with a mechanism to engage in open and transparent communication with the entire school community.

The framework below highlights the cycle of school self-evaluation. It is important to note that the process is iterative in that it facilitates repeated cycles of analysis or a return to a previous stage of the cycle as required.

The school self-evaluation cycle – the six-step process:



SSE is not new

- Results obtained by students in state examinations have been closely analysed by the Principal, Board of Management and subject departments for a long number of years with performance compared to national outcomes
- All subject departments evaluate and update their plans and methodologies on an annual basis
- The School Planning team conducted a survey of parents, students and staff most recently in relation to our Wellbeing Plan
- Evaluation questionnaires are given to TY parents, students and staff every year

Mindful of best practice and the requirements set out in the Draft Guidelines, the Board of Management commits itself to overseeing a meaningful and ongoing process of school self-evaluation across a wide range of criteria.

The BOM, at its May 2023 meeting, determined that the focus for the next strand of SSE, adhering to the overall scheme as set out in the draft guidelines, will be as follows:

- Attendance
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Academic Tracking
- Wellbeing

Attendance (SSE)

At St Columba's College, we are committed to encouraging our students to develop a pattern of regular and punctual attendance in order to benefit fully from the education provided. Without such a pattern of regular attendance, it is very difficult to achieve the holistic development and the full potential of each student.

Good attendance is promoted in the school by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his or her own learning and achieve full potential through regular presence in class.

Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance. This is also promoted through the Pastoral Care programme.

All students swipe with their ID card on machines to register on the Anseo attendance system before 9.05am. This data is imported to the VShare administration software. The subject teachers record pupil attendance electronically in each class on VShare. Absence notes are submitted to the Year Head on return to school. He/she subsequently amends the absence unexplained to absence explained on VShare. The Year Heads monitor pupil attendance on a daily basis. If students need to leave school during the school day they must bring a note in

advance and present it to the Deputy Principal who records it on the system. If students do not present a note to leave their parent/guardian must sign them out of school.

Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the importance of regular attendance. Each student is encouraged to aim for excellence in their attendance and participation in school activities

Subject teachers record attendance every class and emphasis the important of attending class.

The Year Heads also monitor attendance on a daily basis and regularly emphasise the importance of attendance at year assemblies. Term reports to Parents/Guardians include a detailed breakdown of attendance for the period in question. All members of the school community are aware of and support the implementation of the Attendance Strategy. Students with excellent attendance are acknowledged in year group assemblies at the end of term and receive certificates of excellent attendance at our prize giving ceremony at the end of year. This is also promoted through the Pastoral Care programme.

Where issues arise with a pattern of poor attendance, short term targets are set with students in collaboration with Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Deputy Principal and parents. The Year Head and/or member(s) of the Student Support Team meet with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue and put in place supports to address obstacles to regular attendance. The Educational Welfare Officer is informed when a student's absence exceeds 20 days following interventions from the school in collaboration with the other stake holders.

The following have roles to play in relation to attendance:

- Subject Teachers: Monitor student attendance in every lesson.
- Year Heads: Promote importance of attendance at assemblies, monitor daily attendance, record reasons for absences and assist those with poor attendance as part of the Student Support Team.
- Deputy Principals: Promote importance of attendance and record students arriving late/leaving early during school day
- Guidance Councillors: Help pupils with attendance issues an assist in putting strategies in place to improve attendance.
- Secretaries: Sending out letters and maintaining a copy of correspondence sent to parents/guardian regarding attendance issues
- Principal: Providing term reports to parents/guardians on student attendance and for providing resources as required to assist where issues arise. The Principal has regular contact with TUSLA/EWO regarding attendance issues.

The overall target for school attendance for 2023/24 is 85% (up from 76% in 2022/23 school year).

Literacy (SSE)

Targets for Literacy (SSE)

- To have more students reading more often
- 42.8% of students read books at home regularly – Target to increase this by 5%
- 39.5% of students never read for enjoyment – Target to decrease this % by 5%

Strategies for development of literacy

- Regular DEAR classes
- Book Shelf in the canteen for students to borrow books from.
- Library cards organised for all interested 1st year students
- Book Club runs every Tuesday – Ms Mc Grath’s room 1:50 pm
- Literacy Noticeboard - Book recommendations
- Book reviews
- Develop a TY Focus group of students
- What teachers are reading – posters
- Book Drive
- Events for World Book Day – Tuesday April 23rd – TY students reading to primary students, Book tasting event for all 1st years
- Teachers reading club – whatsapp group
- Teachers book shelf in the staff room
- Participation in the READ DL event
- Paired reading for students with literacy difficulties (parents-students) through Ms Holmes

DEAR Timetable

Week of 29 th January	
Week of 26 th February	
Week of 18 th March	
Week of 15 th April	
Week of 20 th May	

‘READ DL’

Two teachers have signed up and books have been ordered.

Four teachers from the English department H will participate in the event *‘READ DL’* with their small 1st year classes.

Recording WellRead Activities

The Literacy Committee to take part in Check-ins through Oide on 5th March 7:00 -7:30 or 20th March (7 – 7:30 pm)

The committee will document all activities to gain award.

Numeracy (SSE)

“Numeracy is the ability to use mathematics to solve problems and meet the demands of day to day living”.

Numeracy targets for 2023/24 includes:

- To encourage Numeracy within the school community (parents, students, teachers) and to make our numeracy strategies visible throughout.
- To improve parents and students’ awareness of numeracy in the whole school curriculum.
- To include a Numeracy column into all subject department plans
- Develop a strategy similar to “DEAR” and name it “SYNC” (Set Your Numeracy Classroom) a simple everyday classroom activity to encourage numeracy in the classroom. (number seats/ tables sequencing activities etc.)

Wellbeing (SSE)

To establish an improvement plan going forward, students, staff and parents were surveyed in September 2023. The results of the survey were as follows:

Students (209)

Top priorities needing attention

1. The school is a safe place for all students (30.1%)
2. Student voice is important in our school community (24.4%)
3. I am aware of the structures in place designed to support the well-being of students (22.5%)

Parents (42)

1. The school is a safe place for all students 12 (28%)
2. Everybody in the school community is valued 12 (28%)
3. I am aware of the structures in place designed to support the well-being of students 12 (28%)

Staff (28)

1. Everybody in the school community is valued 7 (25%)

2. The school is a safe place for all students 6 (21%)
3. Parents/guardians involvement in students' education is welcomed and encouraged 4 (14.3%)

Targets

1. To establish why and where students feel unsafe at school through the student focus group and take actions to reduce the percentage significantly.
2. To raise awareness of the structures that are in place in the college to support the wellbeing of our students by using visual displays and the school social media platforms.
3. To review the capturing of student voice in the college and make changes and additions if necessary.
4. Investigate with the student focus group why some students don't feel valued. Establish the School of Sanctuary programme to reduce the numbers recorded in the survey.

Academic Tracking and Target Setting (SSE)

Targets

- To encourage Subject Departments to make broader use of the assessment data the school gathers
- To help improve evaluation of assessments used within subject departments
- To aid curricular planning and evaluation at subject department level for teaching and learning
- To identify areas for improvement and reaffirm good practice at subject department level
- To foster collaboration in subject departments in creating annual targets and review process

Actions

- Create Subject Excel for 16 Exam Subject Departments in Junior Cycle
- Create AEN Excel for each Junior Cycle Year group
- Develop support documents for Annual Target Setting and Review
- Update assessment data following each assessment, e.g. Autumn, Mocks, Christmas, Summer
- Focus on assessment data at Whole School Planning Workshop
- Survey each Subject Department regarding the templates for analysing assessment data
- Share insights among staff ongoing basis

Persons / Groups Responsible

- Principal/ Deputy Principals
- Administration Staff
- SSE Academic Tracking and Target Setting Team
- Subject Department Coordinators
- Teaching Team

Criteria for Success

- Greater awareness of the assessment data available at subject department level
- Subject Departments engage in Target Setting and Target Review on an annual basis
- Teacher engagement at Whole School Planning Workshop – understanding the data
- Teachers sharing target setting success and challenges
- Evidence of review of assessments/ curricular planning/ target focus within subject departments
- Develop clear data analysis documents to help monitor progress of Junior Cycle students

B. TL21 Programme

Overview

The TL21 programme is a professional learning programme for post-primary teachers which has been running since 2003. The programme invites post-primary teacher participants to play an agentic role in shaping and pursuing their own professional learning.

The aims of the programme have remained deliberately the same and deliberately simple:

- to strengthen teachers' capacities as the authors of their own work;
- to enable students to take a more active and responsible role in their own education.

Granville review (2019) highlighted the “demonstrable impact of TL21” and its “national and international significance ... with implications for education practitioners, policymakers and researchers in Ireland and elsewhere ...”

Six teachers and one Deputy Principal have taken on the project in St. Columba's College. The following is an outline of the programme for our school:

Focus

- Acknowledging Effort – Focus on Positive Behaviour
- Key focus every 6/7 weeks with first year student groups. Focus 1: Active Listening (Feb - Easter); Focus 2: Respect (Easter - May)
- Teacher and student - positive language surrounding effort towards achieve the agreed behaviours
- Stamp gained in a booklet each lesson to acknowledge effort made

- Teachers gave students a presentation regarding the TL21 project and behaviour goals within class.

Base Line Data

The project developed following a few meetings with the TL21 teachers and discussion coming from observations in behaviour within lessons and how the disruption from Covid 19 has impacted students based on observation from teachers in their classrooms.

Google form survey has been completed by all first year students gaining some insight into their thoughts on learning and how behaviour impacts learning in class. The students will be surveyed again at the end of May. All first year students are involved in the Google survey so we will look at the difference between students within TL21 Classrooms and not – also we will look at student's responses that have 2/3 classes involved in the TL21 project to see if there are any observations to be made here.

Link with academic tracking (our 5th SSE strand) we hope to look to the academic results of the groups involved in the TL21 project also into 2nd year.

Target Group

First year student of teachers involved in the TL21 project. Some students are exposed to the project in 2 or 3 subjects.

Dissemination

At each staff meeting/ subject planning meetings this year the staff have been given an update by a member of the TL21 team as to where we are at with the project, decisions made and letting staff know when we are meeting and attending workshops.

There is a Google Classroom set up for anyone on staff to join if they want to know any more – here we upload an overview of all our team meetings, TL21 workshops, share resources from workshops, presentations for students, posters teachers are using, template for booklet, Student Survey and any research/ background documentation, etc.

Subject Departments – informally there is discussion at some subject department level and we hope this will come into play more as we get more interested teachers involved.

Evaluation

We are evaluating all the time as we go along - Team meetings and workshops we discuss what is working well and not – teachers are sharing the different practices that work with their class groups and the different approaches to stamping booklets.

Student Google Form – survey thoughts on learning and behaviour at beginning and again at the end of May.

Teacher reflection journal – each week teachers are recording any observations from the week in the TL21 class groups.

Student focus group and Teacher focus group – we are going to gather data and observations after Easter.

Timeline (2023/24)

- January to May – two focus points
- Gauge student perspective at beginning and end
- Gather student reflection after Easter
- Focus group on teacher reflection/ journal after Easter on impact on teaching and learning environment
- End of May – ask any staff interested in trying it our next year with a class group to let us know, increase the number of staff and students involved.

2. Building & Plant Development

The Board of Management has the following goals for their term (2022-25):

- To continue to maintain the existing school campus in good order and repair.
- To ensure that all health and safety regulations are complied with.
- To provide new accommodation for the school community with support from the DES Schools Building Programme as per the specifications attached in appendix 1. The college was accepted on the ADAPT 2 Building Programme in February 2019. Following extensive surveys and consultation, the college received planning permission for a major extension and refurbishment of the college in August 2022 which will further enhance the facilities in the college. The project includes the provision of 6 Science labs, 4 Construction/Engineering Rooms, 2 Art Rooms, 2 Home Economic Rooms, 2 Computer/Multi Media labs, A Multi-Purpose Hall and Fitness Suite, a Library, a Special Needs base (two classrooms with additional accommodation), a number of general classrooms, offices, and external hardcourt play areas. Stage 2b Report was submitted to the DES Building Unit in September 2023. It is disappointing the project has not progressed to the Tendering stage. Every effort will be made by the school management to progress the project.

The College is very grateful to the Stranorlar Parish Committee for the use of the old St. Mary's National School as temporary accommodation until 2026 when the major development is due to be completed. This rental agreement will need to be renegotiated with the parish due to the delayed progress with the proposed development.

3. Staffing and School Leadership

As employer, the BOM of St. Columba's College commits itself to working in a spirit of close cooperation with all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff and to being as supportive as possible of all staff members. The BOM is keen to acknowledge that the

excellent reputation enjoyed by the school is due in no small measure to the commitment, understanding and support of all staff, both past and present.

The following arrangements are presently in place so as to ensure the proper empowerment, involvement, communication, representation and development of all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching:

Staff meetings - teachers

Staff meetings are held in accordance with the school calendar that is published annually. The Principal prepares the agenda and circulates it, along with the minutes of the previous meeting prior to the staff meeting. It is accepted by all staff that meetings are to be conducted in a respectful and dignified manner and that personal and/or professional criticism of any member of staff is not permitted at such meetings. It is also accepted by all staff that matters of a sensitive or confidential nature that may be discussed at such meetings are to be treated in a professional manner. Arrangements for staff meetings are kept under ongoing review by the Principal and may be altered following feedback from, and with the agreement of, staff.

Staff meetings – administrative staff

The Principal meets with the administrative staff as a group on an ongoing basis

Staff meetings – SNA staff

The Principal, a Deputy Principal along SENO meets with the SNAs collectively on a weekly basis

Department meetings

Teachers of each subject area form themselves into departments. Departments meet in accordance with the school calendar throughout the year to address such issues as resource requirements, in-service training, allocation of students to classes and timetabling matters.

Trade Union meetings

Meetings of members of trade unions in the school are called by the respective school steward. All such meetings take place outside of class contact hours. The BOM recognises the important role played by trade unions in the workplace and commits itself to dealing with union matters, members and representatives in a respectful and professional manner. The BOM allows the school premises to be used for such meetings during normal opening hours on the understanding that the time and venue for such meetings will not cause inconvenience for non-union members.

The Principal, with the support of the Board of Management, will continue to:

- Build a capacity for leadership among all staff members.
- Encourage staff members to propose and lead initiatives.
- Provide C.P.D. to empower staff members in areas of leadership

4. Further develop effective channels of communication with all stakeholders

The college will strive to develop and maintain effective channels of communication with parents and the wider school community through letters, emails, text messaging and social media (Facebook and Instagram).

One area that needs to be address in the short term is the college website. The platform on which it is build has become outdated and obsolete. Requests for tenders for the redevelopment of our website will be sought in May/June 2024. It is hope to launch our new website at the beginning of the school year in 2024/25.

Review and Amendments:

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.

Amendments may be made to this policy as deemed necessary by the school Board of Management, with consideration for input from relevant stakeholders.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th May, 2024

Signature: P. J. McGowan Date: 15/5/24
(Chairperson, St. Columba's Board of Management)

Signature: [Signature] Date: 15/5/2024
(Principal)

Appendix 1: Details of building works approved by the DES School Building Programme.

Planning and Building Unit.

Brief Formulation Process
62861F St. Columba's College
Feb'19

Schedule of Suggested Future Use 18.06.09 Department of Education and Skills

Appendix B

Planning & Building Unit

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills



St. Columba's College, Stranorlar
Roll No: 62861F

Issue 1 – 08th July 2018

SCHEDULE OF SUGGESTED-FUTURE-USE			
Room No.	Existing Room Function	Suggested Future Use	Floor Area (m ²)
1968 BLOCK (Refab)			
1	Boiler Room	Demolish	-14.2
2	S.E.T.	Demolish	-13.6
3	Female Toilets	Demolish	-13.5
4	Hygiene Room	Demolish	-11.9
5	Male Toilets	Demolish	-11.4
6	Home Economics Room	Demolish	-14.2
7	Science Lab	Demolish	-17.0
8	Infirmary	Demolish	-12.5
9	Office	Demolish	-11.6
10	Principal's Office	Demolish	-26.3
11	Admin Office	Demolish	-15.6
12	Home Economics Room	Demolish	-85.4
13	General Classroom	Demolish	-42.5
14	Home Economics Room	Demolish	-84.2
15	General Classroom	Demolish	-42.5
16	General Classroom	Demolish	-42.5
17	Deputy's Office 1	Demolish	-17.3
18	Meeting Room	Demolish	-24.5
19	Corridor/ Circulation (Incl Lockers)	Demolish	-156.0
20	Deputy's Office 2	Demolish	-20.1
Sub-Total Area (m²) 1968 Block (Refab)			-799.8
Internal Wall & Partitions @ 6%			-46.0
Total Area (m²) 1968 Block (Refab)			-847.8
Please Note:			
▪ This building is to be demolished.			
1983 BLOCK			
1	Administration Office	Site - 1 no. Principal's Office	18.6

Appendix C

Planning & Building Unit

**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills



St. Columba's College, Stranorlar

Issue 2 Feb'19

Roll No: 62861F

School	St Columba's College, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal	Roll No:	62861F
Principal:	Tom Rowan	Email:	stcolumbascollege16@icoms.net
		☎:	0749131246

Projected Long-term Enrolment of: 900 Students

Total Residual Floor Area: 5,019 m² ||

Original:	Date of Issue:	Date of Acceptance:
_____	_____	_____
Rev. No. :	Date of Issue:	Date of Acceptance:
_____	_____	_____

Schedule of Residual New Build Accommodation				
No. of Spaces	Type of Space	Dimension m	Area per space m ²	Total Area m ²
3	Specialist Classrooms: Tech Graphics x 1; Multimedia x 2	7.65 x 11.58	88.6	265.8
5	Science Laboratories (24 students)	7.65 x 11.58	88.6	443
2	Preparation Area (shared with adjacent laboratories)	7.65 x 5	38.5	77
1	Preparation Area	7.65 x 2.5	19.1	19.1
4	Art/Craft Room x 2 (30), Home Economics Room x 2 (24) <small>(x no. incl. in existing)</small>	7.65 x 15.5	118.6	474.4
2	Construction Studies/ Engineering/ Technology (24)	7.65 x 19.45	149	298

