

St. Mary's N.S. Ashbourne



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Work Experience Policy

Work Experience Policy

This policy was formulated by St. Mary's National School in order to clarify the school's position on the provision of temporary work experience to those who may be seeking an unpaid work placement. It is guided by School Placement Guidelines issued by the Teaching Council in partnership with the HEIs. The school's policy on school placement should inform the understanding of the whole-school community (management, staff, parents and learners) regarding the school's engagement with the initial teacher education (ITE) programmes (especially the school placement component of those programmes) and secondary/ third-level students, including adult students engaging in FETAC training.

1 Introduction

The Board of Management of St. Mary's N.S. acknowledges the following regarding initial teacher education and the role of school placement in this process.

- Positive school placement experiences are critical to ensuring appropriate initial teacher education for all student teachers.
- Close collaboration between schools and HEIs and any other relevant organisation is essential to positive and meaningful school placement experiences for student teachers.

2 Development of Policy

This policy was developed by the Board of Management following consultations with all members of the school community. This policy was formulated having regard to the increasing number of requests from different organisations (such as HEIs, Secondary Schools) and from individuals to provide opportunities for work experience placements in St. Mary's N.S. It is expected that implementation of this Policy will ensure continuity of routine, teaching and learning within the classroom setting, and will also limit disruption to regular school routines. The Policy will provide for an equitable and fair allocation of opportunities for placements throughout the school and should ensure that excessive demands are not placed on any individual class or teacher. It recognises that every member of staff has a responsibility to contribute to the positive professional development of the student teacher.

3 Commitment to hosting

Student Teacher

- It is desirable that schools host student teachers for placement and, in doing so, provide student teachers with the opportunity to observe teaching and to teach classes independently, in collaboration with suitably qualified practicing teachers.
- In the course of school placement, student teachers require the support of the whole-school community in their journey towards professional competence.
- Hosting student teachers on placement is enriching for the learners in a school, student teachers, cooperating teachers, the wider school community and HEIs. In particular, learners benefit from a greater variety of teaching, learning and co-curricular experiences through the structured participation of student teachers in the school. Furthermore, the school gains access to a variety of newer approaches to teaching and learning through its engagement with student teachers and HEI staff.
- HEI placement tutors benefit from partnership experiences with schools and from being in the actual setting of a school during visits to student teachers.

St. Mary's N.S. is committed to hosting student teachers for school placement and, in this context, adopts without modification as part of this school placement policy the Guidelines on

School Placement developed by the Teaching Council in consultation with all relevant education partners.

<http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Guidelines-for-School-Placement-.pdf>).

Hosting a student teacher on placement will, among other things, involve the student teacher observing classes being taught by members of the school's teaching staff. It will also involve student teachers teaching classes, in the first instance, while being observed and supported by the teacher with primary responsibility for the welfare and educational progress of the class (the cooperating teacher). Then, as the student teacher's competence develops, the student teacher will move to teaching classes independently in line with HEI requirements and the student teacher's particular stage of development on the ITE programme.

The Student Teacher Placement Co-ordinator, in collaboration with the Principal, will allocate student teachers to co-operating teachers and classes. The Principal/Student Teacher Placement Co-ordinator will discuss the possibility of having a student teacher in a given class with the class teacher. Teachers will be placed in classes, having regard for: the stage the student teacher is at in his/her initial teacher education programme; the particular needs of the learners in a particular class; the requirement for the student teacher to experience an appropriate range of placement contexts; and any special circumstances of which the co-operating teacher has an awareness.

- In the normal course of events a student teacher will not be accepted during the first two weeks of the school year or during the last 2 weeks of the school year.
- A request for a placement will only be considered following a written request from a HEI or from an individual to the Principal. All requests for placement will then be referred to the school's Student Teacher Placement Co-ordinator.
- Non-probated teachers will not have a student teacher in their class.
- Only one student teacher per class per year will be accommodated.
- The student teachers will rotate amongst the staff, whenever feasible. There will be no onus on teachers to accept another School Placement student if they had one the year prior.
- Class teachers will be made aware of the impending arrival of the student teachers at least 2 weeks in advance.
- It is important that student teachers should follow the agreed scheme of work and timetable as discussed with the class teacher. The class teacher may be involved in teaching for a specific part of the day, even when a student teacher is required to teach for the full day.
- Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis with preference given to past pupils.

Transition Year Work Experience

- The school will consider applications for placements from secondary school students seeking work experience as part of the Transition Year programme on a case by case basis, with preference given to past pupils.

- Application must be made to the school principal.
- Transition Year students must furnish the school with appropriate documentation from the secondary school which they attend (letter requesting a placement for the student and evidence of insurance for the student.)
- All students must have completed successful Garda Vetting procedures and Statutory Declaration prior to commencement. There is no exception to this.
- Secondary schools should be informed of the foregoing and its responsibility to inform its students in advance.

Others

- From time to time, other people who do not fit into these categories may seek observation time or work experience in the school. Their request for observation/experience may be granted by the Principal after consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Management, if it is felt that such a placement would not be disruptive to the life of the school.
- These placements will only be granted after student teachers and transition year work experience have been considered.

4 Induction of student on placement

All students on work placement will, prior to commencing their placement, be provided with an orientation to the key personnel, ethos and work of the school, where appropriate. This orientation shall involve the provision of any key policies and procedures relevant to their work placement, such as an information pack that will include details of key school policies, in particular the school's Student Code of Behaviour, Child Protection, Homework and students will also receive a Student Teacher Placement booklet.

Mobile Phone Use

- Mobile phones may not be used in the school building or on the school yard by Work Experience candidates except during break times. However, acceptable phone usage during this time is expected.

Dress Code

- Work experience students must dress appropriately and neatly.

Confidentiality

Anyone who is engaged in work experience in our school is required to observe the following requirements of confidentiality:

- Confidential or private documents should not be read. No-one doing work experience may remove any documents or copies of same, from the school, unless with the consent of the Principal.
- School business and procedures should not be discussed outside of school by people engaged in work experience. It is particularly important to respect the confidentiality rights of children, parents, teachers and other school staff.
- If a written report must be compiled as part of work experience, nothing in it should indicate the names of individual pupils or teachers (except in neutral terms such as class lists, etc.)

- Where appropriate, all written reports on the school done by people on work experience should in the first instance be shown to the Principal.

General Points

- School starts at 9.20am and finishes at 2pm/3pm. Be punctual. If you are going to be late, contact the school.
- Those on work experience are expected to remain in the school until 3pm unless consent to leave is given by the Principal.
- If you need to leave the school premises at any time, please inform the Principal.
- All people on work experience shall be entitled to a 10-minute morning break and a 30 minute lunch break.
- All Students on placement will be provided with an area to have their lunch.
- Remember that all staff must be treated with utmost respect. Address staff by their formal name (Ms X, Mr Y etc) unless advised otherwise.

Discipline and Child Protection

- The teaching staff are responsible for discipline in the school. People on work experience may not discipline children of the school. Students on teaching practice should follow the school's Code of Behaviour, under the direction of the Class Teacher, while they are teaching. If people on work experience have a concern regarding behaviour, they must report it to a member of the teaching staff.
- If people on work experience have any concerns regarding child protection, they must report it to the Designated Liaison Person or the Deputy DLP.

5 Supports for the Work Placement Students

The school community is committed to supporting positively and sensitively the student teacher in accordance with the Guidelines on School Placement developed by the Teaching Council in consultation with all relevant education partners and other relevant organisations.. Furthermore, the school is committed to allocating the work placement students to (an) appropriate co-operating teacher(s) and to the classes essential to him/ her undertaking his/her school placement successfully.

6. Continuing professional development for staff involved in supporting facilitating student placement

The school management authority and the school's senior management are committed to promoting and facilitating the participation of school staff in continuing professional development programmes essential to ensuring the successful operation of work placement in the school.

Refusal/Termination of work placement

Request of work experience may be refused if:

- In the view of the principal sufficient placements have already been granted for the year.
- The Board does not feel that the work placement will be of benefit to the school.
- Evidence comes to light of child protection concerns regarding the applicant.

Work placement may be terminated if

- The supervising teacher(s) or the Principal are not satisfied that the appointee is contributing adequately to the life and work of the school, or is creating friction among staff or pupils.
- Inappropriate behaviour, especially towards children or members of the school community.
- The Principal/Board becomes concerned about the suitability of the appointee.
- **Note:** If someone on work experience is dismissed, both the person themselves and their sponsoring organisation (if applicable) will be informed of the reason(s) for the dismissal. Principles of natural justice will be followed at all times.

9 Communication of placement policy to school community

A copy of the placement policy is made available to school personnel and the Parents Association and the policy is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy is made available to parents/guardians of all learners enrolling in the school and all new teachers at the point of their employment, either electronically or in hard copy.

10 Policy reviews

This policy will be reviewed by the school management authority periodically.

11 Date of policy adoption

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 22nd March 2023.

Pat O'Connor

Chairperson
Date: 22nd March 2023

Paul O'Connor

Principal