



Coláiste Pobail Acla

Subject Options Policy

Coláiste Pobail Acla,
Polranny,
Achill,
Co. Mayo.

Roll No.: 76150V
Phone: 09845139
Email: info@cpacla.ie
www.colaistepobailacla.ie

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1. Introduction

Coláiste Pobail Acla seeks to create an inclusive school community where values, behaviours and attitudes are consistent with our Mission Statement;

We strive to motivate our school community to realise its full potential academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally in a safe, supportive learning environment.

In partnership with parents and the wider community, it respects individual self-worth and aims to provide a safe environment in which each student may achieve his/her full potential.

2. Background

This document outlines the rationale and procedure for student subject choice at Junior and Senior Cycle in Coláiste Pobail Acla.

3. Support Services

Coláiste Pobail Acla recognises the importance of subject selection and supports students and parents in this process. These supports include:

- Classroom Teachers
- Guidance Counsellor
- SEN Co-ordinator
- Principal and Deputy Principal

4. Guidance

A comprehensive career guidance and counselling service is available to all students at Coláiste Pobail Acla. The career guidance counsellor helps students with study skills, subject choices, courses and college information and with wider educational and personal matters. Senior students have one class of career guidance each week. Junior cycle pupils receive information as the need arises.

5. Subject Choice at Junior Cycle

Optional Subjects

Home Economics

Materials Technology (Metal)

Materials Technology (Wood)

Graphics

Music

Geography

Art

Business Studies

Core Subjects

Irish

English

Maths

French

History

Science

C.S.P.E.

S.P.H.E.

Physical Education

All subject options are subject to sufficient teacher allocation.

All optional subjects listed above will not be offered every academic year.

Junior Cycle students have the option of choosing three subjects for Junior Cycle in addition to the core subjects studied as part of the curriculum offered in Coláiste Pobail Acla. Subject selection is made within three option lines.

Procedure for construction of option lines:

- Incoming First Year students complete a subject choice form giving their subject choices in order of preference.
- These results are inputted into the VSware subject choice generator.
- A subject may be removed from the VSware generator at this stage if the number of students choosing it is deemed to be too low. In this situation, this subject would not be timetabled for the incoming First Year students.
- VSware then selects the lines with the best possible outcome for all students.

All First-Year students will have the option of sampling each subject when the line is generated. Students will sample each subject for a period of one or two weeks in September. Students will make their decision when each subject in the line has been sampled.

Subject selection is influenced by the following:

- Individual preference for the subject.
- Ability in subjects
- Feedback from class teacher in the form of verbal, formal and continuous assessment.
- Input from Guidance Councillor.

Please note that practical subjects are limited to a maximum number of students per class. In the event where the demand for a subject exceeds the necessary provision the following will be factored into consideration:

Students' progress in the subject during the sampling process including the following but not limited to:

- Academic progress including the examination of grades awarded for work during the sampling phase.
- Competency and ability within the subject (as determined by the subject teacher)

The subject teachers evaluate the student's suitability based on the above and will make a recommendation to the student.

Class sizes

The maximum class size will not exceed 30 pupils in standard classroom subjects. In practical classes, the maximum number will not exceed 24 pupils, except Home Economics where the limit is 20.

School Management will endeavour to notify Parents/Guardians of subject options in a timely manner.

6. Subject Choice at Senior Cycle

Optional Subjects for Senior Cycle

Geography

Construction Studies

Design & Communication Graphics

Music

Business

Biology

Physics & Chemistry

History

Engineering

French

Accountancy

Home Economics

Agricultural Science

Art

Core Subjects

English

Maths

Irish

LCVP

Physical Education

Career Guidance

R.S.E.

All subject options are subject to sufficient teacher allocation.

All subjects listed above will not be offered every academic year.

Students will be required to select four subjects at senior cycle. The process of subject selection for Fifth Year students will commence in April prior to the commencement of that year.

Rationale

Subject choice selection for Senior Cycle is an important process and students and parents/guardians are asked to carefully consider the choices they will make. Coláiste Pobail Acla will make every effort to meet the requirements of subject choice as determined by students and their parents/guardians in a particular year. This however is influenced by the following factors:

- The school's ability to offer a subject in each year.
- The availability of teaching staff qualified to teach a particular subject.
- The demand for a subject relative to the cohort in a given year.
- Sufficient Teaching Allocation to provide the subject.
- Specific optional subject year groups may be combined i.e. 1st & 2nd Year, 5th & 6th Year where the Teaching allocation doesn't allow for individual year groups.

Process

Students participating in the Transition Year programme will have completed the necessary research and availed of supporting information through the year through their Career Guidance classes.

- Parents will be invited to an Information evening/Fifth Year subject choice meeting, containing a presentation by the school's guidance counsellor.
- After this meeting, students will receive a Fifth-Year subject choice form. Students will be asked to indicate their top eight subject preferences.
- Completed subject preference forms will be returned to the school by the specified date and the process will then begin of drafting lines onto which different subjects will appear. This is a detailed process and insofar as possible, Coláiste Pobail Acla will aim to facilitate students' top preferences. This will be completed using VSware in a similar way to the Junior Cycle option lines.

These completed forms will be returned by the student to the school by the specified date. It is expected that the process of timetabling will continue during the summer months and in this event, students will be informed of their available subjects on their return to school at the start of Fifth Year at the latest.

Pupils' Advisory Session

The Guidance Counsellor organises a session with current third years about subject and programme choices for Senior Cycle and their implications for third level and further study. Pupils are advised on matriculation, minimum entry requirements, course requirements and the points system etc. This takes place the same week as the Information evening/Fifth Year subject choice meeting.

School Management will endeavour to notify Parents/Guardians of subject options in a timely manner.

7. Non-return of Subject Preference Form

When a student fails to return his/ her preference form by the specified deadline then the process of subject line formulation will continue without his/ her preferences accounted for. He/she will then select a subject from each of the lines generated.

8. Change of Subject

There may be some scope for change of subject at the start of the school year. Subject changes, if any, must be completed by the last Friday in September. This is to minimise disruption to teaching and learning and to reduce the amount of course content missed by that student. It is expected that the student will initially discuss this matter with their parent/guardian. The process of subject change is as follows:

- The student will arrange a meeting with the Guidance Councillor to discuss his/ her possible change of subject. The student should also inform their current subject teacher about this meeting. Should the Guidance Councillor support the subject change then the following stages apply:
 - The student will discuss the change with both subject teachers (teacher of current subject and teacher of new subject).
 - If both teachers agree with the change, they will then complete the subject transfer form which is submitted to the Deputy Principal.
 - It will be the responsibility of the student to collect a change of subject form from the Deputy Principal or the School Secretary. This will state the proposed subject change and must be signed by student and their parent/ guardian. This is to be returned to the Deputy Principal/ School Secretary by the next school day.
 - The Deputy Principal will make the necessary adjustments to the class lists and the student will then be part of the new class on a date specified by both teachers.

In the situation whereby any teaching staff member involved in the change process feels it necessary to discuss this matter with the parents/guardians concerned, the change will not be facilitated until this meeting has taken place.

9. Change of Subject Level

Change of subject level is a matter warranting careful consideration. For subjects where classes are divided according to subject level and a student wishes to change level, the following procedure will apply:

- (A) The student will first discuss their consideration with their subject teacher. He/she will provide feedback to the student regarding their progress and ability within the subject.
- (B) If necessary, the student may need to discuss the consideration with the guidance counsellor.

- If there is agreement at (A) and (B) above that it is in the student's best interests to change level, then the student will speak to the teacher of the class that he/ she is proposing to transfer to.
- If the teacher agrees to the transfer, the student will complete the change of subject level form and submit this to the Deputy Principal. The form will also specify a date from which the change will take place and the class lists will be amended accordingly.
- Please note that class sizes are permitted to a maximum number. In the event where a class has reached maximum capacity:
 - The student may decide to remain studying that subject at the current level
 - The student may change level but continue in the same class group. Work and progress will be assessed by the class teacher.

10. Students Discontinuing Subjects

Students discontinuing a subject is a matter that warrants serious consideration. If a student wishes to discontinue a subject the following process must be followed:

- The student will first discuss their consideration with their subject teacher. He/she will provide feedback to the student regarding their progress and ability within the subject.
- If necessary, the student may need to discuss the consideration with the guidance counsellor.
- If the student is still determined to discontinue the subject, then a letter must be provided by Parents/Guardians to the Deputy Principal giving permission for the student to discontinue the subject.
- If a student discontinues a subject, they must stay in the same timetabled classroom as the students who are continuing with the subject and study quietly at the time of those timetabled classes.

11. Students Studying Subjects Outside of School

Students are expected to engage in the core and optional subjects as provided in Coláiste Pobail Acla. The school will not be in a position to provide teaching to students studying additional subjects outside of the curriculum provided. Students may speak to the Exam Secretary about sitting an exam which is not on the Coláiste Pobail Acla curriculum. This is generally accommodated wherever possible. Students studying subjects outside of school should satisfy themselves that they meet the criteria for assessment as determined by the State Examinations Commission e.g. subjects containing a practical/coursework element. The student must specify any additional subjects in their application for State Examinations.

12. Subject Options in Transition Year

Depending upon the curriculum delivered as part of the Transition Year Programme, students' will sample different subjects that appear on the same line e.g. Engineering and French may appear on the same line. In this situation, students will study one subject until Christmas of the school year before rotating to the alternative subject for the rest of the year. Students will be divided into groups by the Deputy Principal.

13. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents and the Student Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. It was adopted by the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla on:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Mr. Pat Kilbane

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Mr. Paul Fahy

Board Secretary & School Principal (Acting)

Appendix 1 – Abbreviations and Acronyms

Below is a list of abbreviations used across several Coláiste Pobail Acla policies and documents.

ACE	Autism Centre of Excellence
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
BOM	Board of Management
BSP	Behaviour Support Plan
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CAT	Cognitive Ability Test
CPNS	Child Protection Notification System
CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
DDLp	Deputy Designated Liaison Person
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Education in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
DLP	Designated Liaison Person
EP	Education Plan
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ETB	Education and Training Board
GRT	Group Reading Test
HSCLO	Home School Community Liaison Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCBI	National Centre for the Blind Ireland
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Education and Welfare Board
NLN	National Learning Network
OT	Occupational Therapy

PC	Pastoral Care
PE	Physical Education
RACE	Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations
RE	Religious Education
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Educational Needs Officer
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SETS	Special Education Teacher Support
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self Evaluation
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
TY	Transition Year