



St. Patrick's College
Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

Subject Options Policy

St Patrick's College
Lacken Cross
Killala
Co Mayo

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1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Support Services
4. Guidance
5. Subject Choice at Junior Cycle
6. Subject Choice at Senior Cycle
7. Non-return of Subject Preference Form
8. Change of Subject
9. Change of Subject Level
10. Students Discontinuing Subjects
11. Students Studying Subjects Outside of School
12. Subject Options in Transition Year
13. Declaration

Appendices:

Subject Choice Form
Subject Transfer Form
Subject Change of Level Form

1. Introduction

St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross seeks to create an inclusive school community where values, behaviours and attitudes are consistent with our Mission Statement which states;

We believe we can make a difference by providing quality education to our students in a caring and respectful environment.

We value respect, fair play, and everyone's right to be himself or herself.

We aim to help our students to develop a sense of their own unique worth, to become their best selves and to respect the rights of others.

We strive for good relationships between our students, our staff and our parents.

We educate our students not only for now but also for life.

2. Background

This document outlines the rationale and procedure for student subject choice at Junior and Senior Cycle in St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross.

3. Support Services

St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross recognises the importance of making the right subject selection and supports students and parents in this process. This includes:

- School information booklets on subject choice.
- Guidance Counsellor advice where necessary.
- Classroom Teachers advice.
- SEN Co-ordinator advice.
- Principal and Deputy Principal advice.

4. Guidance

A comprehensive career guidance and counselling service is available to all students at St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross.

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 at least one class of career guidance each week and the opportunity for one-to-one counselling. Junior cycle pupils receive information as the need arises and as part of the school's wellbeing programme.

5. Subject Choice at Junior Cycle

Core Subjects	Optional Subjects
Gaeilge (Irish)	Business Studies
English	Engineering
Maths	French (Modern Foreign Languages)
Science	Geography
History	Graphics
	Home Economics
Short Courses	Music
C.S.P.E.	Visual Art
Physical Education	Wood Technology
S.P.H.E.	
Wellbeing	
I.C.T.	

***All subject options are subject to sufficient teacher allocation from the Department of Education.**

Taster Programme

All First-Year students will have the option of sampling each subject at the beginning of the school year. This taster programme will start in September and run until the Halloween break. At this point, a parent - teacher-student meeting will be held during which everyone involved will have the option to discuss subject choice.

Teachers, parents, and students will also be able to reflect on the student's results in the CAT 4 test which provides an indication of potential/ability in subject areas. Parents/Guardians will receive a copy of their child's results prior to this meeting.

Junior Cycle students have the option of choosing **five** subjects for Junior Cycle in addition to the core subjects studied as part of the curriculum offered in St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross.

Procedure for construction of option lines in First Year:

- Incoming First Year students complete a subject choice form giving their subject choices in order of preference at the end of a specific taster programme.
- These results are inputted into the VS Ware subject choice generator.
- VS Ware then selects the lines with the best possible outcome for all students.

Subject selection is influenced by the following:

- Individual preference for the subject.
- Ability at the subject.
- Feedback from class teacher in the form of verbal, formal and continuous assessment.
- Input from Guidance Principal/Deputy Principal/Guidance Councillor (where appropriate)

Please note that all 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 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 academic subjects. In practical classes, the maximum number will not exceed 24 pupils however the maximum number of students for Home Economics is 20.

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

6. Subject Choice at Senior Cycle

Core Subjects	Optional Subjects
Gaeilge	Agricultural Science
English	Art
Maths	Biology
Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP)	Business Studies
Career Guidance *	Chemistry
Physical Education*	Construction Studies
	Design and Communication Graphics
	Engineering
	French
	Geography
	History
	Home Economics
	Music

*Non-Examination Subjects

From time to time depending on student interest and teacher availability, the following subjects may be offered by the school – Applied Maths, Chemistry and Physics.

Parents and Guardians should note the following: -

All subject options are subject to sufficient teacher allocation from the Department of Education.

All subjects listed above may 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.

As new subjects are offered by the Department of Education, St Patrick's College will endeavour to offer these subjects to students.

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.

St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross 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 specific 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.

Subject selection is influenced by the following:

- Individual preference for the subject.
- Ability and previous effort/work rate at the subject.
- Feedback from class teacher in the form of verbal, formal and continuous assessment.
- Input from Principal/Deputy Principal/Guidance Councillor (where appropriate)
- Whether the student sat the subject or not for Junior Cycle.

Process

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

- Parents will be invited to an Information evening/Fifth Year subject choice meeting, containing a presentation by the school's guidance councillor.
- The school will administer the CAT4 Level G test for all students and share the results with parents and guardians.
- Students will receive a Fifth-Year subject choice form. Students will be asked to indicate their subject preferences (1 – 13). These numbers may change depending on the number of subjects offered due to teacher availability.
- 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, St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross will aim to facilitate students' top preferences. This will be completed using VS Ware in a similar way to the Junior Cycle option lines.

- In the event whereby it will be impossible to draft subject lines based upon preference selection, the school will then draft subject lines.
- The principal's decision on such matters is final.

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

Pupils' Advisory Session

The Guidance Counsellor organises a session with current Transition Year and students considering moving directly into Fifth Year after the Junior Cycle about subject and programme choices for Senior Cycle and their implications for third level and further study.

Pupils are advised on minimum entry requirements, course requirements and the points system etc. This takes place the same week as the parents/guardians' advisory session.

Members of the teaching staff will also hold information sessions for these class groups.

Pupils and parents are also strongly advised to research subject choice using websites such as www.careersportal.ie, www.qualifax.ie or www.solas.ie and the relevant college course websites.

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 within the first two weeks of the start of the school year. 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 Counsellor to discuss his/ her possible change of subject. Should the Guidance Counsellor support the subject change then the following stages apply:

1. The student will discuss the change with both subject teachers (teacher of current subject and teacher of new subject) and the Guidance Counsellor.
2. If both teachers agree with the change, they will then complete the subject transfer form which is submitted to the Deputy Principal. (See Appendix 2)
3. It will be the responsibility of the student to collect a change of subject form from the Deputy Principal or the front office. 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/front office before the student can change subject.
4. 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 councillor.

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, he/she 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 to remain in that class. Work and progress will be assessed by the class teacher.

10. Students Discontinuing Subjects

Students discontinuing a subject is also a matter that warrants serious consideration. The school actively discourages students from dropping or discontinuing a subject.

- If a student wishes to discontinue a subject, their parents should contact the school and arrange a meeting (in person) with a member of senior management and the subject teacher or the guidance counsellor.

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 councillor.
- A meeting (outlined above) will take place after which a letter must be provided by Parents/Guardians to the Deputy Principal giving their 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.

The interruption of teaching and learning is a serious breach of the school's Code of Behaviour.

11. Students Studying Subjects Outside of School

In certain cases, the school will accommodate students studying additional subjects outside of the curriculum provided. This may occur when students require certain subjects for college choices that the school subject selection process does not allow for or when students wish to study their native language, for example.

However, **we strongly advise our students to engage in the core and optional subjects as provided in St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross.**

If this is the case, the student and their parent/guardian should make a written submission to the school Principal **within three weeks** of the start of the school year.

All submissions will be dealt with on an individual basis by the school Principal.

Please note that St Patrick's College does not have additional resources to provide for subjects outside of the ones provide for after the subject choice process.

Students studying subjects outside of school should first satisfy themselves that they meet the criteria for assessment as determined by the State Examinations Commission e.g. subjects containing a practical/coursework element. These criteria change regularly.

The student must specify any additional subjects in their application for State Examinations. Students may speak to the Exam Secretary about sitting an exam which is not on the St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross curriculum. This is generally accommodated wherever possible.

Students taking extra subjects for the Junior Cycle Award should note the following –

- As per circular 0028/2023, the school is unable to provide descriptor grades for Classroom Based Assessments (CBA's) where the student is studying a subject outside of school.
- In this instance, CBA's will be reported as 'not reported' on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.
- Students will also not be able to complete Assessment Tasks in these subjects.

A link to circular 0028/2023 can be found at the following...

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/258539/a64f7934-e58a-4a7b-be8b-82894b72a7dc.pdf#page=null>

12. Subject Options in Transition Year

Depending upon the curriculum delivered as part of the Transition Year Programme, students will sample different subjects that may appear on the same line e.g. Engineering and French. 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.

13. Declaration

This St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross 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 St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross on:

Signed: Sean Carey
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 15-5-24

Signed: Brian Jennings
Secretary Board of Management

Date: 15/05/2024.

Appendices

Subject Choice Form
Subject Transfer Form
Subject Change of Level Form

Mr. B. Jennings B.A., B.Sc. M.Ed

Principal

Mr. D Burke B. Tech. (Ed.)

Deputy Principal

Telephone: +353 (0)96 34177 / 34742

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Subject Change Form

Dear Parent(s),

Your son / daughter _____ has asked to change subject from _____ to _____.

He / she had a meeting with the relevant teachers to discuss the implications of such a move and they have been advised to discuss this matter at home with you.

If you are agreeable to the change please sign the consent form below. Should you have any questions you can contact the school.

I understand and accept responsibility for the implications of this change.

☐

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Brian Jennings

Consent Form

Parent signature _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Career Guidance Teacher _____

Date: _____

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ETB

*Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim
Education & Training Board*

Subject Level Change Form

Your child wishes to change subject level from _____ to _____
in _____ class. He / she had a meeting with the relevant teachers and guidance
counsellor to discuss the implications of such a move on the following date

Should you have any questions you can contact me at the college.

I understand and accept responsibility for the implications of this change of subject level. ☐

I understand that my child may have to remain in the same classroom when they change level. ☐

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent signature: _____

Date: _____

Teachers signature: _____

Date: _____

Guidance Counsellor: _____

Date: _____

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Principal

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Dear Parent,

*Your son/daughter has asked to change subject from _____
to _____.*

The school has concerns about this move and in line with our subject option policy would like you to arrange a meeting in person to discuss this matter at your earliest convenience. Please note that no change can be made until this meeting takes place.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Brian Jennings

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Principal

Mr. D Burke B. Tech. (Ed.)

Deputy Principal

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Subject Withdrawal Letter

Dear Parent,

Your son/daughter has asked to withdraw from _____ as a subject from their Leaving Certificate.

The school has concerns about this matter and in line with our subject option policy would like you to arrange a meeting in person to discuss this issue at your earliest convenience. Please note that no change can be made until this meeting takes place.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Brian Jennings

