

SCHOOL ELECTIONS - guidelines



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Preface

Elections are the process of choosing a person or a group of people for a position, usually by voting. The election process builds leadership and social skills in students, it provides opportunity to build values of fairness, justice and responsibility, as well as understanding and experience of a democratic process which is centred on citizenship education. It is for these reasons that The Education Board of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) and The Presbyterian Education Authority of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) have produced guidelines for good practice in the running of school elections in their schools. It fits CBC and PCC's goal to enhance learner-oriented teaching and learning strategies, teaching for liberation that will enable learners to cope with the challenges of our rapidly changing world. School elections are an opportunity for learning and teaching through practice, skills that will serve as foundations for student's personal and professional development and enable our young people to build a successful society for themselves.

These guidelines were produced using a participatory approach – 34 schools were surveyed, to understand current practices, reasons for using these, advantages, disadvantages, and suggestions for change: 124 school administrators, 124 teachers, 240 students and 120 prefects contributed, from Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, government and lay private schools. Students said what they had learned from having elections in schools – good and bad things. This enabled us to come out with a framework of modern, standardised guidelines, codes of conduct, background information and notes, that were tested in six additional colleges during their 2009 elections. Feedback and comment was incorporated into these final booklets.

In order that elections run smoothly certain groundwork must be put in place. If students are asked to vote for their school prefects it must for example be clear to those voting, and the candidates, what each prefect post involves - responsibilities, duties, limits, etc. If this is not stipulated then the students can not be expected to choose appropriate candidates. Clear job descriptions inform post holders exactly what they are expected to do. This enables supervising staff to coordinate prefects, providing a check list for assigning and monitoring tasks. In order to maintain discipline the students must know behaviours and activities that are permitted and that are forbidden, codes of conduct must therefore be put in place. A clear and fair procedure for 'appeal' must state process and final authority, be published and known by students. This booklet provides samples.

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Contents

Preface	1
Contents	2
Responsibility of school administrations	3
Requirements for prefect ship.....	4
General rules and regulations for prefects	5
Prefect posts and the role and responsibilities of each	7
Stages in the running of school elections	12
*Check list of election materials.....	15
Code of conduct for student election campaigns.....	15
General provisions	15
Application form for prefect position	16
Sample Application form for prefect posts.....	16
Ballot papers	17
Ballot paper – sample	17
Recording sheet	18
Post election coordination, management and smooth running of prefect teams	19

Responsibility of school administrations

School administration shall -

- i. Provide a policy and guidelines defining the aims and mission of its prefect system.
- ii. Create awareness amongst students and staff on the management of school elections, ensuring fairness, equity and uniformity.
- iii. Provide a code of conduct and eligibility for student candidates for prefect posts.
- iv. Publish the above documents on all notice boards, in the first term.
- v. Publish the specific prefect posts, and terms of reference for each, including qualifications for eligibility.
- vi. Ensure that a staff meeting precedes the election period, with all staff briefed on their roles in relation to student government.
- vii. Create and publish an appeal system. The appeal board being impartial, neutral persons.
- viii. Punish those who contravene rules, regulations and codes of conduct.
- ix. Form an elections committee that shall include administration, staff and students. This committee shall be sensitised in the organisational procedures and conduct.
- x. Develop student government as part of the social tradition of the institution, with election activity included in the school calendar.
- xi. Recognise that prefects are students, not workers, thus teachers shall cooperate with prefects as mentors, supporting, encouraging, guiding and counselling in order to develop sound leadership skills, Christian values and an orderly and fair school community.
- xii. Appreciate that prefects cite a most difficult aspect of their position being humiliation from staff and administration that undermines their post and relationship with fellow students.
- xiii. Ensure that teachers and staff are adequately aware of their own role in mentoring prefects, giving due regard and respect to prefects, recognising the challenging duty they have undertaken.

Requirements for prefect ship

Qualifications and experience

- i. Academic record must be above average.
- ii. Behavioural record must be exemplary, including absence or attendance record
- iii. Student must be registered in year four or lower six and have attended the college for >2 years.

Personal skills and aptitudes

- i. Self-confident: be bold and assertive.
- ii. Ability to speak in public, to students and adults.
- iii. Team working skills.
- iv. Be organised and resourceful.
- v. Be polite, honest, reliable, punctual and hardworking.
- vi. Demonstrable interest and ability in the area of the post applied for, be it health, sport, music.

Accountability

- i. Prefects are ultimately responsible to the principal, vice-principal and discipline master.
- ii. On a day to day basis prefects are responsible to the individual member of staff managing their post, as specified in the college guidelines for prefects.

Responsibilities

- i. Prefects must adhere to School rules and regulations at all times.
- ii. The main duty of prefects and dormitory captains is to maintain an atmosphere of friendly cooperation, peace, discipline and unity in the college.
- iii. Prefects should serve as councillors to junior students.
- iv. Prefects must liaise and collaborate with each other, as a team, to ensure efficiency and smooth running of their own area of responsibility and of the school as a whole.
- v. Prefects academic and behavioural standards must be maintained.
- vi. Prefects will always work in the interest of the school.
- vii. All discipline notes from prefects must be reported to the Discipline Master.

Limits to authority

Implementation of discipline is carried out by school authorities/employees. School authorities can use the services of prefects for supervision only.

General rules and regulations for prefects

- i. The student community is called to live together in peace and discipline, to respect the rights of each and every one in the community.
- ii. Conscious of the tradition and culture of good and fair governance handed down over the years;
- iii. Desiring to uphold the principles of good governance so as to enhance the harmony of coordinated action;
- iv. In pursuant of cherished peace that is begot from the equity, discipline and peace that enhances a conducive academic milieu, we hereby put in place rules and regulations to serve as a guide for any student government.

Membership of student government

- i. The student government shall be constituted of students who have been democratically elected to posts of responsibility*. They will become members following an investiture ceremony by the school administration in a solemn general assembly of the school.
- ii. Prefects shall carry a badge that distinguishes their office of service.
- iii. Each prefect shall have a document defining his/her area of competence, roles and duties.
- iv. Prefects shall, in discharging their duty, act in love, assuming the role of senior brother/sister to the junior ones placed in their charge.
- v. The head prefect shall consult with the school administration on matters of policy, and sanctions.
- vi. Prefects shall promote discipline in all their domains, coordinated by the head prefect.
- vii. Prefects will ensure the smooth functioning of the school in matters of peace, order and discipline and strict respect of school rules and regulations without fear or favour.
- viii. The school administration will convene prefects meetings to revamp, revitalize and concert on matters affecting the day to day student life in the community.
- ix. The members of government prefects shall be boys/girls of integrity, who will teach by examples respecting the rules and regulations of the institution.
- x. The prefects will respect hierarchy, honour and obey their teachers and at no time will they usurp the place of the administration.
- xi. The prefects must give students appearing to have broken rules or regulations, an opportunity to give themselves a fair hearing, so they be corrected in love to deter any future occurrence of the crime.
- xii. The prefects shall not sublet their authority to their friends for convenience.
- xiii. They will in all school activities lead and serve.
- xiv. The prefect will in everything represent the school image positively. He/she shall ensure the pursuit of academic excellence and orderly behaviour.
- xv. His/her moral and academic life shall always be a model for the student community to emulate.

School elections guidelines

Corporal punishment is forbidden in Cameroon's schools, by Presidential decree, and by law # 98/004 14 April 1998. Part IV for students.

* If it happens that there is no applicant for a post then the administration must make every effort to encourage applications. If unsuccessful then at the end of the elections the school administration appoints.

*When only one applicant applies for a post, all efforts will be made to encourage others.

Prefect posts and the role and responsibilities of each

The table below is designed as a guide or framework. Each school has its own combination of prefect posts, some include posts not in the list below, some have additional posts, some schools may combine some of those listed. The guidelines are intended to illustrate the structure that a post description should include, ie –

Title,

Accountability, who the prefect is responsible to (equally, who is responsible for each post),

Main duties, the purpose of the post, eg. to promote sports in the school and assist the sports master in

The detail to be included in the description of each post is left to the discretion of each school, bearing in mind that the purpose of a post description is to aid school administration and -

- i. Inform the applicant,
- ii. Serve as reference for the selection committee,
- iii. Serve as reference to the post holder, once appointed,
- iv. Serve as reference members of staff responsible for prefects,
- v. Serve as reference against which to award prizes to prefects who excel,
- vi. and for disciplinary measures when post holders do not fulfil their duties.

Our outline duty of refectory prefect specifies – ‘Ensure cleanliness, order and peace during meals.’ Individual schools may expand this to include specific tasks, like -

- i. Responsible for prayers before and after meals,
- ii. Responsible for announcement and distribution of letters,
- iii. Draws up table list and appoints table captains,
- iv. Ensures food is shared equitably on each table,
- v. Releases approved quantities of food items from the store for each meal,
- vi. Chairs the food committee. etc.

School elections guidelines

Post	Responsible to	Function / duties include -
Dining Hall /Refectory /Food Prefect	Teacher in charge of Boarding	<p>Ensure cleanliness, order and peace during meals. Report mismanagement in quality, quantity or distribution of food Ensure cleanliness of kitchen and dining room, and that meals are taken punctually. Coordinate table heads/captains</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Farm Prefect	Teacher in charge of Works	<p>Assist farm master/mistress in coordination and supervision of farm work.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Keys Prefect	House parents / Teacher in charge of Discipline	<p>Responsible for keys of dormitories and class rooms: correct collection and return of keys to and from vice principle. Lock and unlock dormitories following official timing. Report missing and damaged keys, locks and doors.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Library Prefect	Librarian	<p>Ensure order, quiet and discipline in the library at all times. Ensure library and surroundings are clean. Promote correct library use, and that rules and regulations are adhered to. Assist librarian with library management and administration: shelving, borrowing, registering, etc.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Music/Songs Prefect	Teacher in charge of Choir	<p>Support choir music master/mistress to promote and coordinate musical programmes and achievement in the college. Supervise use and care of music books, clothing, equipment and instruments Ensure cleanliness and order in music room. Work hand in hand with religious prefect</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>

School elections guidelines

Prep /Education Prefect	Teachers in charge of Prep and discipline	<p>Ensure 'cahier de texts' are in class every day and correctly completed.</p> <p>Produce and oversee prep supervision rota.</p> <p>Collaborate with sanitation /utility prefects to ensure classrooms are clean and equipped for classes.</p> <p>Organise and ensure care of pedagogic materials.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Religion Prefect	Chaplain	<p>Ensure students uphold and participate in religious and worship life of the school, report activities contrary to this.</p> <p>Assist chaplain and religious committee to implement religious programmes of the college; eg bible studies, prayer groups, outreach, morning devotions, communion, collections.</p> <p>Serve as congregational secretary</p> <p>Ensure order, peace and cleanliness in the chapel.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Sanitation/ Health Prefect	<p>Teacher in charge of Sanitation</p> <p>School nurse/ Teacher in charge of Health or Discipline</p>	<p>Ensure cleanliness of campus, lawns, corridors, buildings.</p> <p>Ensure dustbins are emptied.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by the administration</p> <p>Organise appropriate care for sick students, and medication of those requiring it.</p> <p>Assist in administration of sickbay.</p> <p>Coordinate cleaning and of sickbay and needs of patients</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Laboratory Prefect	Science Department Head	<p>Ensure cleanliness and order in laboratories.</p> <p>Help prepare laboratories before classes.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Senior Prefect	Teacher in charge of Discipline / Vice Principal Principal	<p>Maintain collaboration amongst prefects. Coordinate prefect activity.</p> <p>Provide link between prefects and administration.</p> <p>Represent the student body.</p> <p>Shall be a member of the disciplinary council of the school.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>

School elections guidelines

Assistant Senior Prefect	Principal, Vice Principal, and Teacher in charge of discipline	Assist, through close collaboration with, the senior prefect. Other duties, as assigned by administration
Social Prefect	Teacher in charge of Socials	Assist social master/mistress in social activities – to produce and coordinate a social programme for students. Ensure effective functioning of school clubs. Responsible for order during social activities. Responsible for care of equipment and facilities used for school social events. Represent the students in external social events. Other duties, as assigned by administration
Sports Prefect	Teacher in charge of Sports/games	Assist in supervising and organising games and other sporting activity, in an orderly, disciplined and effective manner. Ensure correct use and maintenance of sports equipment and facilities. Promote sports and encourage orderly involvement and achievement in sport Other duties, as assigned by administration
Time Keeper / Punctuality Prefect	Teacher in charge of Discipline	Ensure that the bell or gong is sounded promptly according to the school horarium, and for other school activities. Ensure that students are in the right place at the right time. Assist the discipline department in conducting roll call. Other duties, as assigned by administration
Uniform Prefects	Teacher in charge of Uniforms	Assist Uniform mistress in ensuring that school uniform policy is respected at all times. Other duties, as assigned by administration

School elections guidelines

Utility Prefect	Teachers in charge of Socials / Works / Discipline	<p>Check lights, water facilities and fans function and report irregularities. Promote judicious use of the above. Promote correct use of furniture and fittings, and report cases of damages need for repair or replacement to appropriate staff. Report students responsible for deliberate damage to property.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Works Prefect	Teachers in charge of works & Discipline	<p>Ensure general cleanliness of school. Help works master/mistress schedule work and ensure students have tools and participate effectively in (and complete) assigned work. Responsible for distribution, collection and care of tools.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>
Class monitors	Class Advisors or Vice Principal	<p>Ensure that classes are clean, orderly and that irregularities are reported to administration.</p>
Dormitory / House Captains	House parents / Teacher in charge of Discipline	<p>Ensure cleanliness, order and discipline in dormitory and immediate surroundings Report to house master cases of damaged or malfunctioning equipment, furniture and utilities, in dormitory. Promote correct behaviour and timeliness in dormitory. Resolve disputes where possible, and report cases of misbehaviour in dormitories. Manage dormitory keys. Lock and unlock at correct times. Represent the house.</p>
Environmental Prefects	Teachers in charge of Works/ Farm Boarding. Environmental Club coordinator	<p>Ensure that ornamental plants are cared for. Ensure that students do not urinate or defecate in the grounds, only in toilets.</p> <p>Other duties, as assigned by administration</p>

Stages in the running of school elections

Steps		Reasons
1	Announce elections and the timetable.	Mobilisation, awakening. Make those who plan to run start thinking about their capabilities and weakness.
2	Create an election committee made up of students, teachers, and the administration. Planning, Assign responsibilities Scheduling, Preparation of materials: check list below.*	Prepare and oversee organization of elections: comprising class reps, staff members, representatives of administration, with a chair appointed from amongst them.
3	Sensitise students on prefect ship and elections	Teach the significance of voting procedure, codes of conduct, elected leadership, choosing good leaders, accountability, etc.
4	Invitation to apply, made in presence of all students.	Transparency and equal opportunity.
5	Publish the different posts, including job description. Publish the general qualifications for prefect ship. Publish 'job description' for each post. Publish code of conduct for prefects. Brief and encourage prospective candidates. Make standardised application forms available from and returnable to known point - Vice Principal's office, or Discipline Master, as case may be.	Enable candidates to size themselves up and see exactly where to fit. Provide reference against which appointments are made, and that post-holders must fulfil to stay in post. Ensure that uniform information is submitted by all candidates.

School elections guidelines

6	Reception and short listing of applications by elections committee, based on published conditions.	Ensure suitability of candidates especially on discipline and academics. Ensures that only qualified candidates enter the race.
7	Publication of approved candidates.	Transparency.
8	Candidates briefed: including that manifesto and campaigns must match the requirements and limitations of posts applied for.	Order and accountability.
9	Code of conduct for campaigns posted in strategic areas of school. Each candidate given a copy.	To avoid disorder and indiscipline.
10	Present candidates to school. Declare campaigns open Campaign code of conduct enforced – any use of sweets, biscuits, intimidation, unrealistic promises, character denigration disciplined.	Provides opportunity for candidates to meet students, adds colour to the school year, instils a culture of fairness, honesty, trust.
11	Candidates speak to students, presenting their manifestos to general assembly. Candidates submit copy of manifesto for filing.	Training in public speaking. Helps electorate judge suitability of candidates. For accountability and future evaluation of post holders.
12	Election conducted in individual classrooms and/or the hall by secret balloting.	Transparency and trust in the exercise.
13	Public counting of the votes at voting site, by class/school election committee. The ballot box must be emptied, each paper opened by one person who hands it	That students know free and transparency and trust. That students know free and fair democratic practice.

School elections guidelines

	<p>to a second person who calls out the names selected. Names are recorded by two separate people, on tally sheets.</p> <p>Invalid papers (that are unclear, altered, etc) are also called out, tallied and totalled.</p> <p>Numbers recorded on each tally sheet are totalled, checked and signed by two people.</p> <p>The result is declared immediately, verbally.</p> <p>If voting is in separate classrooms then three written copies of the result are signed by the committee present, one is pasted on the information board or wall of the class, the other sent to the central counting centre, the other to central notice board.</p> <p>If voting is in a single hall, then two signed copies of the result are made, one posted on the notice board, one filed by the principal.</p>	
14	Immediate official announcement and publication of results, on notice board at each voting site.	Transparency and trust in the process.
15	Orientation of elected prefects - coordinated by the discipline department with different duty post holders.	Helps elected prefects to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
16	Installation and dedication by the administration	Newly elected leaders are installed in their functions (empowerment)

***Check list of election materials**

- i. List of prefect posts
- ii. Roles and responsibilities of each prefect post
- iii. Qualifications for prefect ship
- iv. Code of conduct for prefects
- v. Application forms for post of prefect
- vi. Code of conduct for campaigns
- vii. Elections guidelines for students
- viii. Ballot papers, printed
- ix. A ballot box – eg a large cardboard box / carton
- x. Tally sheets for recording the votes
- xi. Forms for declaration of winning candidates
- xii. Badges for prefects

Code of conduct for student election campaigns.

- i. School rules are to be followed at all times, including any schedule for campaigning.
- ii. Violations of rules and regulations and codes of conduct shall be punished.
- iii. Campaign speeches will contain only attainable proposals, and no insults or criticism of opponents.
- iv. Candidates and their representatives or supporters are forbidden to use any kind of intimidation, threats, materials, food or financial inducements, with the aim of influencing votes.

General provisions

- i. In the case of a tied vote, a re-run will be held. If there is still a tie then the head of institution will have the casting vote.
- ii. When a candidate runs for more than one position, and in their second or third choice turns out to be the only candidate the school authority must respect the student's choice and make an appointment for the others.
- iii. Any individual with a grievance concerning any aspect of the elections is free, and shall be encouraged to submit a written complaint following the school's published appeal procedure.

Application form for prefect position

A standard application form should be produced, that all applicants must fill and submit to the selection committee.

It could include the following notes.

- i. If you apply for more than one position, then a separate form must be completed for each post.
- ii. If you apply for more than one post then you must indicate which is your preference, second choice, third choice. If you receive the most votes for more than one post then this stated preference will be respected and the candidate with the second largest vote will be appointed to the other position.
- iii. Maximum of three applications per student.

Sample Application form for prefect posts

Name	
Class	
Post you are applying for	
If you are applying for more than one position is this your 1 st , 2 nd or 3 rd choice?	
If you have you been a prefect before which position did you hold?	
How many years have you attended this school?	
Why do you want to be a prefect?	
Why do you want this particular prefect post?	
What is your class average?	
If you have a discipline record, give details	

Ballot papers

- i. A sample ballot paper will be posted on the central notice board representing the official candidate list.
- ii. Ballot papers will be printed, by each school, immediately the candidate list is produced.
- iii. One ballot paper will be required for each student – the correct number should be printed, otherwise some students may be unable to vote, or some to make multiple votes.

Ballot paper – sample

POST	CANDIDATE	Mark a cross to indicate one choice for each post
Senior girl	Evelyn	
	Grace	
	Sarah	
Refrectorian	Alice	
	Grace	
	Limunga	
Works prefect	Stella	
	Susan	
	Clara	
Religious prefect	Kate	
	Estelle	
	Winifred	
Sports prefect		
Health prefect		
Prep prefect		
Time keeper		
Library prefect		

Recording sheet

POST	CANDIDATE	TALLY	TOTAL
Senior girl	Evelyn	//// //	15
	Grace	//// //// //// //// //// //	27
	Sarah	//	2
Refrectorian	Alice		
	Grace		
	Limunga		
Works prefect	Stella		
	Susan		
	Clara		
Religious prefect	Kate		
	Estelle		
	Winifred		
Sports prefect			
Health prefect			
Prep prefect			
Time keeper			
Library prefect			

Signed as accepted (by at least one teacher and two student members of count committee)

Counting committee member 1 _____

Counting committee member 2 _____

Counting committee member 3 _____

Post election coordination, management and smooth running of prefect teams.

Our prefect systems are to be treated part of the educational provision of our schools. We encourage students to be prefects, because it is a learning opportunity, a chance to gain skills and experience that serve as an additional qualification when they graduate. Research has shown that a majority of successful professionals, in business, management and other areas, participated in student government while at school. Many young people confirm that being a prefect was difficult and challenging, but that they benefited later in life, through success gaining employment and posts of responsibility and leadership - they appreciate the skills they built as a result of being a prefect.

- i. Periodic meetings between the administration and prefects will be held to ensure smooth functioning of prefect activity. Prefects as well as admin may call these meetings, which will provide mentoring to prefects as well administrative function.
- ii. Senior prefect will convene regular prefects meetings, for team building, mutual support, and smooth running of prefect duties.
- iii. An appeal session will be held every Friday night where those on punishment list can present and appeal their cases.
- iv. All discipline notes from prefects shall be reported to the teacher responsible for discipline.
- v. The names of students, crimes and punishments will be published. This will ensure that transparency and fairness prevails.
- vi. Administration will check against abuse of power, brutality, corruption and disrespect of hierarchy by prefects and dismiss offenders.
- vii. Administration will provide student government with stationery required to fulfil their duties.
- viii. Senior prefects will be members of the disciplinary council.