

Standing Orders – Flemington Primary School Council (includes Code of Conduct)

Introduction

The purpose of these Standing Orders is to assist school council to operate efficiently and effectively within the legal framework and Department guidelines for school councils. To be read in conjunction with the 'code of conduct'.

School council membership

The membership of the school council according to its constituting Order is 13 members comprising

- 8 parent members;
- 4 Department employees; and
- 1 Community member.

The Principal as the Executive Officer counts as one of the 4 Department employees.

Office bearers

The school council will have the following office bearer positions.

- President
- Vice president
- Treasurer

Office bearers will be elected at the first meeting of the school council after declaration of the poll each year. Department employees may not be office bearers.

Election of office bearers

In the election of an office bearer, if the votes are tied, the school council will decide the outcome by either holding a new election or drawing of lots. If a new election is held and is also tied, the school council may decide the election by the drawing of lots or decide to conduct further elections until the election of office bearers is decided.

Sub-committees

The school council will have the following sub-committees.

- Finance
- Instrumental Music Program (finance)
- Education (review role)
- Facilities
- Policy
- OSHC

Each sub-committee will be chaired by a member of school council unless otherwise decided by council. A sub-committee must include at least one school council member and have at least 3 members.

Working Parties

The Council may establish working parties that are set up for a specific task for a set period of time to support the work of the council or sub committees. Working parties are covered by the same rules as sub-committees. They cannot make decisions but instead make recommendations to either a sub-committee or school council. Members of the community are invited to join a working party, which is led by a member of school council.

Regular Meetings

The school council will meet at least 8 times per year on Monday evenings during term (typically twice per term) nominated by the Principal in consultation with School Council. The meeting will commence at 7.00 pm and will finish no later than 9.00 pm. Unless agreed by the school council. Meetings will be held in the staff room.

Public reporting (annual) meeting

The school council will call a public meeting in March each year and at that meeting will:

- a) Report the proceedings of the council for the period since the date of the previous public meeting;
- b) Present the annual report published by council;
- c) If the accounts of the school have been audited, present a copy of the audited accounts.

The Annual Report will also be published on the school website and available as a hard copy at the office.

Quorum for meetings

- For a quorum to be achieved at a council meeting, not less than one half of school council members currently holding office must be present and a majority of the members present must not be Department employees. Any parent members on the council who also work for the Department are counted as Department employees for the purpose of a quorum.
- If at the end of 30 minutes after the appointed time for a meeting of the school council, there is no quorum present, the meeting will stand adjourned to a time and place determined by the school council members present.
- A member of the school council may be present at a council meeting, in person or by video conferencing or telephone.

School council decisions

- Decisions of the school council will be by a majority of those eligible to vote and who are present at the meeting. A vote by proxy is not valid.
- Members will vote on a matter and the number of votes for and against will be recorded in the minutes.
- Voting may be by a show of hands, but a secret ballot may be used for particular issues. School council will need to approve a recommendation (motion) to go to secret ballot.

Tied votes

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against a decision), the president (or presiding member) has a second or casting vote.

Absence of the president and other members from a meeting

- If the president is unable to preside at a school council meeting, the vice president will chair the school council meeting.

- If both the president and the vice president are unable to preside at a school council meeting, the school council will elect a member of the school council to chair the school council meeting (other than an employee of the Department).
- If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the principal prior to the meeting.

Conflict of interest

If a school council member or a member of his or her immediate family has any direct conflict of interest (including a financial interest) in a subject or matter under discussion at a school council meeting, that councillor:

- must declare the conflict of interest
- must not be present during the discussion unless invited to do so by the person presiding at the meeting
- must not be present when a vote is taken on the matter
- may be included in the quorum for that meeting.

Extended leave of a council member

- A member of the school council may apply in writing to the president for extended leave of up to 3 consecutive meetings.
- If a member of a school council is granted extended leave, the membership of that member is excluded in determining the requirement for a quorum of not less than half the members currently holding office.

Agenda

- Any business sought to be included on the agenda for a meeting must be notified to the principal (acting principal or president when the principal is absent) not less than 10 school days before the meeting. Any proper business notified later than the cut off may be held over until the next meeting.
- A precis of the agenda will be included in the school newsletter before the meeting (excluding confidential information)
- The principal shall ensure an agenda is prepared for each regular meeting and distribute the agenda, draft minutes from the previous meeting and meeting papers such as sub-committee reports, principal's and president's report to school council members no later than the Monday before the meeting.
- The principal may add to the agenda and table materials at a meeting as the principal sees fit for the orderly management and operation of the school.

Conduct of business

- In general, the business of school council, including decisions and debates, is to be conducted at meetings.
- Meetings to be conducted according to the agenda.
- On occasions, urgent or necessary motions may be circulated to school council by the principal by e-mail. Each councillor may be required to respond with a vote or abstention to such motions (it is important to note that motions via email would be expected to be a known issue. Otherwise it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that school council members are well informed of the issue. It is also important to note that an extraordinary meeting may be called if more information or discussion is required regarding an urgent motion required via email).

Open and closed meetings

- School council meetings will generally be open to the school community but the principal and school council may decide that only members may be present at a meeting or part of a meeting. School council will need to approve a recommendation (motion) to go into closed session. School council should then return to open session once the topic under discussion has been concluded.
- If the meeting is open, visitors may speak by invitation of the presiding member.

Length of meetings and extensions of meeting times

If business has not been concluded within 2 hours, the presiding member must ask the members whether they wish to defer the rest of the business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting. A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting. The meeting will be extended for no more than 15 minutes.

Minutes

- The principal will ensure a record of each school meeting is kept and draft minutes are prepared after each school council meeting and distributed to school council members prior to the next school council meeting. The principal may delegate this responsibility.
- The minutes will record the type of meeting (regular, extraordinary or public); date, time and venue of meeting; names of attendees and apologies received from members; name of presiding officer; a record of the business of the meeting including the decision on the minutes of the previous meeting; inward and outward correspondence and reports of any sub-committees tabled at the meeting; and decisions of the meeting including motions and any amendments, names of movers and seconders, whether the motion was carried or rejected and the number of votes for and against. Agreed actions arising from council business shall also be recorded in the minutes.
- When school council minutes are submitted for confirmation, only questions regarding their accuracy as a record of the meeting are to be raised.
- Once the minutes have been accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting, they are to be signed by the school council president or the person who presided at the meeting.
- Business arising from the minutes is dealt with after the minutes have been confirmed.
- To keep the school community informed about the operations of school council, a summary of school council decisions and actions will be reported in the newsletter in the week of the council meeting. The content of the summary report will be determined by the principal and school council president. The summary report will not include confidential information.
- School council meeting minutes will only be provided to school council members. As they may contain confidential and/or personal information they must not be distributed further by school councillors. Any queries from the school community regarding the minutes should be addressed to the principal.

Extraordinary meetings

An extraordinary meeting of school council may be held at any time decided by the council, if all members are given reasonable notice of the time, date, place and object of the meeting. The president of the school council, or in the absence of the president, the principal must call an extraordinary meeting of the school council if either of them receives a written request to do so from 3 members of the school council. The president or the principal must call a meeting under the preceding paragraph by sending a notice to all school council members giving the members reasonable notice of the time, date, place and object for which it is called.

Casual vacancies

A school council fills a casual vacancy by co-opting an eligible person to the relevant category. A person co-opted to fill a casual vacancy serves the unexpired portion of the vacating member's term of office.

A casual vacancy is created when a person dies, becomes bankrupt, is of unsound mind, resigns, is convicted of an indictable offence, was at the time of election or co-option ineligible, becomes ineligible, is a registrable offender within the meaning of the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, is absent from three consecutive meetings of the school council without special leave previously granted by the school council and subject to a decision of the school council, in the Department employee member category, goes on any form of leave with or without pay, for more than six months or where the maximum number of Department employee members is exceeded.

School council principles

The school council will operate according to the following principles:

- **Respectful** partnerships
- Clear and **honest** two-way communication
- **Transparent** processes
- **Democratic**, informed decision-making
- Personal and professional **integrity**.

In the conduct of meetings, the following etiquette will be observed by members:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- All requests to speak are directed to the presiding member.
- All speakers are listened to in respectful silence.
- No 'side conversations' are held.
- Members shall listen to the discussion carefully in order to avoid making points that have already been made or asking questions which have already been answered.
- When the presiding member indicates that the topic of discussion is closed, no further comments are made.
- Members shall not use jargon.
- Members will ensure that all electronic devices (such as mobile phones) are silenced and no calls are taken during the meeting.
- Members shall stay calm regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic.

Useful links:

School Policy and Advisory Guide – School Councils

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/councils.aspx>

School Councils - Making the Partnership Work

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolcouncil.aspx>

Code of conduct for school councillors

School councils in Victoria are public entities as defined by the Public Administration Act 2004. School councillors must abide by the Directors' Code of Conduct issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commissioner.

The code of conduct requires councillors to:

- act with honesty and integrity (be truthful, open and clear about their motives and declare any conflict of interest should it arise)
- act in good faith in the best interests of the school (work cooperatively with other councillors and the school community, be reasonable, and make all decisions with the best interests of students foremost in their minds)
- act fairly and impartially (consider all sides of an issue before making a decision, seek to have a balanced view, never give special treatment to a person or group and never act from self-interest) and regularly seek the views and opinions of the whole school community
- use information appropriately (respect confidentiality and use information for the purpose for which it was made available)
- use their position appropriately (not use their position as a councillor to gain an advantage)
- act in a financially responsible manner (observe all the above principles when making financial decisions)
- exercise due care, diligence and skill (accept responsibility for decisions and do what is best for the school)
- comply with relevant legislation (know what legislation is relevant for which decisions and obey the law) demonstrate leadership and stewardship (set a good example, exercise care and responsibility to keep the school strong and sustainable).
- A council member who is approached by a parent with a concern relating to an individual is in a privileged position and must treat such discussion with discretion, protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the people involved. If the issue relates to an operational matter of the school, the parent should be encouraged to speak with the principal or the classroom teacher. However, if the issue relates to a school policy or procedure, it should be put on the agenda for discussion at the next school council meeting, where it will be dealt with in a generic sense to protect the privacy of individuals involved.
- Councillors should observe the need for orderly council meetings and that council needs to “speak as one voice” in the public arena, once a decision has been made.

Approved by School Council on 28-11-16

To be reviewed annually