



SCHOOL COUNCIL & STANDING ORDER POLICY

(Cited by School Council: May 2022)

PURPOSE:

A school council operates within the legal framework of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 and the Yarra Glen Primary School's School Council's constituting or standing orders. This policy is structured to ensure school councils operate in accordance with operational requirements.

GUIDELINES:

In essence, the role of School Council is one of helping to set the long-term future for the school and maintaining oversight (not management) of the school's operation. It is not about running the school – that is the job of the Principal.

The responsibilities of School Council include:

- contributing to the development of the school's Strategic Plan and monitoring expenditure.
- developing, monitoring, reviewing and updating policies
- developing, reviewing and monitoring e.g. Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and the School Dress Code (this includes how students are expected to dress during school hours including traveling to and from school, and any arrangement with clothing suppliers that the school might enter into)
- informing itself and taking into account the views of the school community when making decisions regarding the school and the students
- arranging for the supply of the things needed for the conduct of the school (such as goods, services, materials and equipment)
- raising additional funds to meet the school needs
- making sure the school's grounds and buildings are maintained
- regulating and facilitating the after hours use of the school premises and grounds.
- creating interest in the school within the community
- making a recommendation to the Secretary regarding Principal selection.

What School Council does not do:

- School Council does not manage the day-to-day running of the school. For example, it does not employ teaching staff, decide which classes students will be assigned to, or sort out issues relating to individual teachers and students and/or parents.
- School Council does not discuss individual issues relating to teachers, staff or parents – these are very clearly management roles, and therefore the Principal's job.
- School Councillors are not appointed to represent specific interest groups or permit special interests to dominate the agenda of the council.
- School Council is also not allowed to purchase land, buildings or motor cars, and it cannot enter into hire purchase agreements or obtain credit or loans, unless it is given permission by the Minister.

School Council membership – Council Constituting Order

Presently Yarra Glen Primary School membership of the school council according to its Constituting Order is 9 members:

4 Parent, 3 Department employee and 2 Community members.

School Council membership Office bearers

The Principal is a member of Council and the **Executive Officer**.

The **President** is an elected non-Department employee and is the chairperson of School Council meetings.

The **Vice-President** is elected and acts as chair of council meetings in the absence of the President. A Vice-President is also a non-Department employee.

The **Treasurer** is elected and chairs the Finance. It is preferred that the position of Council treasurer be held by a non-Department parent or community member.

The **Secretary** is elected and can be held by any member of School Council.

Terms of office

School Councillors are elected for two-year terms. All elected members of school council have the same term of office, rights and responsibilities as those of elected councillors. Half the council members retire each year but they can stand for re-election.

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)
- 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 to decision making, and obey the law)
- demonstrate leadership and stewardship (set a good example, exercise care and responsibility to keep the school strong and sustainable).

Indemnity for school council members

School councillors are indemnified against any liability in respect to any loss or damage suffered by the Council, or any other person, in respect to anything necessarily or reasonably done, or omitted to be done by the councillor in good faith in:

- a) the exercise of a power, or the actions taken as a member
- b) the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power, or the actions taken were part of council roles and responsibilities of a member.

In other words, school councillors are not legally liable for any loss or damage suffered by council or others as a result of reasonable actions taken in good faith.

School Council meetings

Frequency

School Council must meet at least eight times per year and at least once per school term. All members are expected to attend meetings. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the executive officer (the Principal) and it should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Length

School Council meetings should require no longer than 2.5 hours. If business has not been concluded by the scheduled closing time for the meeting, the chair should ask councillors whether they wish to defer the rest of the business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting by a specified period of time (for example, 15 minutes). A motion is necessary if Council wants to extend the meeting.

Agenda

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 less than five days before the meeting.

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. If the meeting is open, visitors may speak by invitation of the presiding member.

Forming a quorum

A School Council meeting must operate with a quorum. A quorum requires not less than one half of School Council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting with a majority of members present who are not Department employees. Any parent members on school council who also work for the Department are counted as Department employees for the purpose of a quorum. A member of the School Council may be present in person or by videoconferencing e.g. webEX or teleconferencing.

Minutes

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.

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.

School Council sub-committees

Sub-committees assist council and report regularly at school council meetings. At Gladysdale Primary School, we have four sub-committees;

1. Grounds & Facilities Committee
2. Finance
3. Education Committee (responsible for the development and maintenance of school policies)
4. Fundraising and Events

These committees provide advice and make recommendations to School Council, which has the final responsibility for decisions. The decision-making responsibilities of the Council should not be compromised by the work of any sub-committee. Council cannot delegate its decision-making powers to sub-committees; for example, approval of the school's budget is the responsibility of School Council. Membership of sub-committees is determined by the Council and is open to School Council and non-School Council members. At least one member of the Council must be a member of each sub-committee.

RELATED LEGISLATION:

School Councils are governed by:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007.
- Public Administration Act 2004
- DET guidelines constituting or Standing Orders

RELATED POLICIES:

Investment Policy
Parent Payments Policy
Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy

POLICY EVALUATION:

This policy is to be reviewed every year by the Policy Review (Finance) Sub Committee of the School Council.

RESOURCES AND ADVICE:

The Department's School Council website provides a range of information on school councils, including roles and responsibilities, elections, operations and strategic planning and policy. Visit: www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils

Schools can also access a range of services and advice through these school council organisations: Association of School Councils in Victoria (ASCIV) www.asciv.org.au and (03) 9808-2499

Victorian Council of School Organisations (VICCSO) www.viccsso.org.au and www.edu.org.au and (03) 9429-5900.

The State Services Authority (SSA) provides information on governance for public sector organisations. Visit: www.ssa.vic.gov.au

POLICY EVALUATION:

Evaluation will be conducted every two years by the Education Committee.

DUE DATE FOR REVIEW:

Due for review in May 2022