



# SCHOOL COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS AND POLICY



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Yarra Glen Primary School on 03 9730 1254 or [yarra.glen.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:yarra.glen.ps@education.vic.gov.au).

## 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 individual school's constituting Order. This purpose of the Standing Orders is to assist School Council to operate efficiently and effectively within the legal framework and Department guidelines for School Councils.

## SCOPE OF SCHOOL COUNCIL

The School Council is a voluntary body that works to ensure efficient governance of the school, make decisions in the students' best interest, enhance educational opportunities and ensure the school complies with its legislative obligations. 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 key functions of School Council with regard to the school are:

- to establish the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community
- to arrange for the supply of goods, services, facilities, materials, equipment, other things or matters required for the conduct of the school, including the provision of preschool programs
- to raise funds for school related purposes
- to regulate and facilitate the after-hours use of the school premises and grounds
- to exercise a general oversight of the school buildings and grounds and ensure they are kept in good order and condition
- to provide for the cleaning and sanitary services that are necessary for the school
- to ensure that all money coming into the hands of the council is expended for proper purposes relating to the school
- to provide meals and refreshments for the staff and students of the school and make charges for those meals or refreshments
- to inform itself and take into account any views of the school community for the purpose of making decisions in regard to the school and the students at the school
- to generally stimulate interest in the school in the wider community
- to prepare the School Strategic Plan and review the Annual Implementation Plan — to be signed by the president and the principal
- to report annually (the Annual Report) to the school community and to the department on:
  - the school's financial activities
  - the School Strategic Plan, and

- any other matters that are determined by the Minister
- to manage the hire, licence and shared use of school facilities
- to determine the dates for the school's student-free days:
  - in accordance with the number of student-free days each calendar year specified by the Secretary of the department
- to perform any other function or duty, or to exercise any power conferred or imposed on the council by or under:
  - the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, or
  - any regulations made under that Act
  - a Ministerial Order made, or direction issued, by the Minister under the Education and Training Reform Act.

**School Council does not:**

- manage the day-to-day running of the school (for example, employ permanent teaching staff or decide which classes students are assigned to)
- discuss individual issues relating to teachers, children or parents – these are management roles and therefore the Principal's job
- represent specific interest groups or permit special interests to dominate the agenda of the School Council
- 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

Full explanation of School Council powers and functions can be found on the Department website at [School Council - Powers and Functions](#).

## STANDING ORDERS

**School Council membership**

The membership of the Yarra Glen Primary School Council according to its Constituting Order is 9 members – 4 Parent, 3 Department employees and 2 Community members.

**Responsibilities of School Councillors**

- Regularly attend meetings of Council
- Read reports prior to each meeting
- Be a member of at least one subcommittee
- Maintain confidentiality as required
- As an elected member, have a prime responsibility to the interests of Council above that of any particular part of the electorate
- Maintain awareness of educational developments
- Participate in at least one professional development activity pertinent to the operation of School Councils or access information from DET
- Complete annual Child Safety training
- It is recommended that all members have a current Working With Children card

**Co-option of community members**

The community members, included in the Ministerial Order 1280, will be co-opted to the School Council at a special meeting of council held as soon as practicable after the declaration of the poll and

before office bearers are elected. If the appointment of the community members either cannot be resolved at the special meeting called or on the resumption of the adjourned special meeting, the School Council may proceed to the first meeting of the School Council to elect office bearers. Co-opted members have the same voting rights as elected members.

### **Casual vacancies**

Should a casual vacancy occur on council, this vacancy is filled by council co-opting a person from the appropriate category who then completes the rest of the term of office of the corresponding vacancy.

### **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.

### **Office Bearers**

The Regulations requires there be at least two office bearers – the President and the Executive Officer. The Principal is a member of School Council and the **Executive Officer**, with full voting rights.

The School Council will have the following office bearer positions:

- **President** – elected non-Department employee and is the chairperson of School Council meetings.
- **Vice-President** – elected and chairs Council meetings in the absence of the President. The Vice-President must also be a non-Department employee.
- **Treasurer** – elected and chairs the Finance subcommittee. It is preferred that the position of Council Treasurer be held by a non-Department parent or community member.
- **Secretary** – elected and can be held by any member of School Council or a person appointed to this role who is not a member of the Council and is therefore a silent member with no voting rights.

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.

See Appendix 1 for description of duties for office bearers.

### **School Council Subcommittees**

Subcommittees assist School Council by working on specific areas in more detail and they report regularly at School Council meetings. These committees provide advice and make recommendations to School Council, which has the final responsibility for decisions. Council cannot delegate its decision-making powers to subcommittees; for example, approval of the school's budget is the responsibility of School Council.

All School Councillors are expected to play an active role in at least one subcommittee.

At Yarra Glen Primary School, we have the following subcommittees:

- Finance
- Fundraising & Events

- Grounds & Facilities
- Education & Policy
- Outside School Hours Care
- Wellbeing

Each subcommittee will be chaired by a member of School Council, unless otherwise decided by the Council. All subcommittees must include at least one School Council member and have at least three members. Membership of subcommittees is open to School Council and non-School Council members.

### **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).

### **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
- YGPS school PERRI values of Persistence, Encouragement, Respect, Resilience and Inclusiveness

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

- only one person talks at a time
- all requests to speak are directed to the presiding member
- all speakers are listened to respectfully
- no 'side conversations' are held

- members will 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 will 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 will stay calm regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic.

### **School Council meetings**

School Council must meet at least eight times per year, at least once per school term, and must achieve a quorum for a meeting to proceed.

#### **Regular**

School Council will meet twice a term with the meeting to commence at 7.00pm and finish no later than 9.30pm unless agreed by the School Council. Meetings will be held in the staff room, unless otherwise advised.

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.

#### **Public reporting (annual) meeting**

The School Council will call a public meeting at least once each year and at that meeting will:

- report the proceedings of the Council for the period since the date of the previous public meeting
- present the annual report published by the Council
- if the accounts of the School Council have been audited, present a copy of the audited accounts.

The Council may, from time to time, call additional public meetings.

#### **Extraordinary meeting**

An extraordinary meeting of the 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 subject 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 three 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 subject of the meeting.

The business of an extraordinary meeting will be confined to the subject for which it is called.

#### **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, with a majority of the members present must not be DET employees. Any parent members on School Council who also work for the Department are counted as DET employees for the purpose of a quorum.

If at the end of 30 minutes after the appointed time for a meeting of 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 in person or by videoconferencing (e.g. Webex) or teleconferencing.

### **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 subcommittee 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.

### **Minutes**

The Principal will ensure a record of each School Council 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 to another person.

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 subcommittees 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.

The Principal should keep the community informed about School Council operations by publishing a report following a meeting. This may be in the school newsletter or other forms of communication to parents.

### **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, where the majority are non DET members. 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 will normally be by a show of hands, but a secret ballot may be used for particular issues.

#### **Tied votes**

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against a decision), the president (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 meeting. If no Vice President has been elected, or in the absence of both President and Vice President, School Council will elect a member of the School Council to chair the School Council meeting (other than an employee of the Department).

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.

#### **Conflict of interest**

If a School Council member or a member of his or her immediate family has any perceived or actual conflict of interest (either financial or non-financial) 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.

The declaration of interest will be included in the minutes of the meeting. If the conflict of interest involves a Principal or Business Manager, it must be entered onto the Conflict of Interest Register or eduPay and managed appropriately.

#### **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 three 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.

## **COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Included in School Council induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

### 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
- [Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils 2020 \(DOCX\)](#)

### Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Investment Policy
- Parent Payments Policy
- Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy

### 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](http://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](http://www.asciv.org.au) and (03) 9808-2499
- Victorian Council of School Organisations (VICCSO) [www.viccsso.org.au](http://www.viccsso.org.au) and [www.edu.org.au](http://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](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au)

## EVALUATION

This policy is to be reviewed every year by the School Council at the first meeting following the annual election.

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	22 May 2022
Consultation	18 May 2022 – tabled at School Council meeting
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2024



## APPENDIX 1

### Office bearers – Role Descriptions

#### Executive Officer – Principal

In addition to the role as primary manager of the school, the Executive Officer will be responsible for ensuring that adequate and appropriate advice is provided to the School Council on educational and other matters, that the decisions of the Council are implemented, and that adequate support and resources are provided for the conduct of Council meetings.

The role of the Principal is to lead and manage the planning, delivery, evaluation and improvement of the education of all students in a community through the deployment of resources provided by the Department of Education and Training and the school community.

#### *The Principal will:*

- Prepare the School Council agenda in consultation with the President
- Provide via email all Council members with minutes of the previous meeting in the week following that meeting, and with an agenda, reports of committees and financial reports by the Friday prior to the next Council meeting
- Notify Council of any apologies received
- Ensure that minutes of the meeting are recorded
- Be the Executive Officer of the Council
- Be an ex-officio member of all Council committees
- Provide Council with timely advice on educational and other matters
- Report regularly to Council about school performance
- Ensure all School Council decisions are acted on
- Provide adequate support and resources for the conduct of School Council meetings
- Communicate with the School Council president about council business
- Ensuring that new School Council members are inducted in a timely fashion

#### President

The President's role is to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting so that the Council arrives at the best possible decisions. This role is not able to be filled by a DET employee.

#### *The President will:*

- Act a chairperson of all meetings of Council
- Conduct the business of Council under the standing orders
- Ensure that the Council remains focused on student outcomes
- Be a signatory to contracts and financial accounts
- Be an ex-officio member of all Council committees
- Act as spokesperson for Council with the Principal and official representative on public occasions.
- Resolve tied votes with a second or casting vote

#### Vice President

The Vice President's role is to assume the role of the President in the President's absence. This role is not able to be filled by DET employees.

#### *The Vice President will:*

- Act as chairperson at council meetings if the President is not in attendance
- Represent the President as required at meetings or functions where the President is not available to attend
- Fulfil any other responsibility of the President when she/he is unavailable

### **Treasurer**

The Treasurer's role is to be a School Council representative in Finance Subcommittee meetings and report the monthly financial reports.

*The Treasurer will:*

- Chair all Finance Subcommittee meetings
- Ensure that all school finances are managed in accordance with DET guidelines
- Work with the Principal and Finance Subcommittee to develop budget recommendations to submit to Council for approval
- Present monthly financial reports and Finance Subcommittee recommendations to Council

### **Secretary**

The secretary keeps accurate minutes of the meeting including relevant discussion.

*The Secretary will:*

- Record minutes of Council meetings
- Provide the recorded minutes to the Principal and the School Council President