

Footscray West Primary School - Standing Orders for School Council – 2022

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.

Purpose of school council

School council is the legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of a school. It is the major governing body of the school that, within DET guidelines, decides the future directions for the school and oversees the school's operation.

School council principles

School councillors will at all times behave with discretion and courtesy and in a civil and respectful manner consistent with our whole school Tribes agreements of:

- Mutual respect
- Personal best
- Attentive listening
- Appreciations/No put downs
- The right to participate /the right to pass

Councillors will promote:

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

The legislative framework

School councils operate under a framework provided by the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act)
- Education and Training Regulations 2007 (the Regulations)
- Individual school's constituting order.

Subject to this framework, a school council may regulate its own proceedings.

School council membership

The constituting Order of Footscray West Primary School states the composition of the Council is:

- 8 **elected** parent members 2 year cycle, Co-opted member one x one year cycle
- 5 DET members comprised of:
 - 4 elected DET employee members
 - the principal who is executive officer

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 retiring member.

Terms of office

- For elected positions (parent and DET), the term of office is approximately two years commencing on the day after declaration of the poll and ending on the day of the declaration of poll in the second year following.
- For casual vacancies, the term of office commences on the date of co-option and ends on the date the vacating member was due to cease office.

Office bearers

The school council should have the following office bearers:

- The **president** is elected by all members of school council and cannot be a DET employee.
- The **vice president** is elected by all members of school council. As the vice president may need to chair a meeting in the absence of the president, this position should be filled by a non DET parent member or community member.

Other potential office bearers

- The **convenor or Treasurer of the finance sub-committee** is appointed by school council. It is recommended this position be held by a non DET parent member, or a community member.
- The **Minute secretary** may be either an elected member of school council or a person appointed to this role who is not a member of school council and is therefore a silent observer with no voting rights.

Principal's Role on Council

- The position of **executive officer** is filled by the principal. The principal is a full member of council with the same voting rights as other councillors.

Role Descriptions

The Executive Officer (**Principal**) shall:

- provide council with timely advice about educational and other matters
- prepare the council's agenda in consultation with the president
- report regularly to council about the school's performance against its strategic plan
- ensure that council decisions are acted on
- provide adequate support and resources for the conduct of council meetings
- communicate with the school council president about council business
- ensure that new council members are inducted

(The principal is an ex-officio member of all council sub-committees)

The President shall:

- effectively chair school council meetings (ensure that everyone has a say in meetings and that decisions are properly understood and well-recorded)
- be a signatory to contracts, the school strategic plan and financial accounts
- together with the school council, endorse the school self-evaluation, terms of reference for school review, the school annual implementation plan and school annual report to the school community
- ensure council stays focused on improving student outcomes
- with the principal, be council's spokesperson and official representative on public occasions
- when votes are tied, have a second or casting vote
(The school council president is an ex-officio member of all council sub-committees)

The Vice President shall:

- in the absence of the president, act as chairperson at council meetings and otherwise represent the president as required

The Treasurer shall:

- co-chair all Finance sub-committee meetings
- work with Finance sub-committee members which includes the principal, business manager and president to:
 - ensure that the school finances are in accordance with DET guidelines
 - ensure that relevant internal control procedures are maintained
 - develop budget recommendations to submit to school council for approval
 - present and explain financial reports and Finance sub-committee recommendations to school council

Quorum

A quorum requires at least half the school council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting, with a majority of members present not being DET employees. Any parent members on school council who also work for DET are counted as DET employees for the purpose of a quorum. Our current council requires 8 of the 15 members to be in attendance, with the majority being parent representatives, for a quorum to be declared.

A member of the school council may be present in person or by video conferencing or teleconferencing.

Tied votes

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against the decision), the president has a second or deciding vote. It is therefore important that when the president offers a personal opinion on an issue, this is clearly stated.

School council decisions

Decisions of Footscray West Primary 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.

Footscray West Primary School Council will try to reach decisions by consensus but when that is not possible, a count will be taken with the number for and against recorded in the minutes.

Voting will normally be by a show of hands, but a secret ballot may be used for particular issues.

Proxies and voting procedures

Eligible members of school council must be present at a meeting to be part of the decision making process. There is no provision in either the Act or the Regulations for proxies. Therefore, if someone is unable to attend a meeting, another person cannot attend and vote on their behalf. A member may be deemed present if they are 'present' through video or tele conferencing.

If the president is absent

In the absence of the president, the vice president must chair the school council meeting. If neither the president nor vice president is present, councillors may elect a member to chair the meeting. This person should be a non DET employee.

School council meetings

Unless otherwise decided, school council meetings will be held twice per term with a minimum of 8 meetings held in a year. Meetings shall run from 7-9pm.

The School Council meeting will be run according to the distributed agenda. Suggested agenda items shall be received to the principal or school council president by close of business on the Wednesday in the week prior to the council meeting.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology prior to the meeting to either the president or the executive officer.

School Council should also present the Annual Report to the School Community at a public forum at which a statement of the school's income and expenditure for the previous calendar year is included. The Annual School Report to the Community shall be posted on the school website and the community made aware of this via the newsletter and the digital push notification app *Flexibuzz*.

An extra ordinary meeting may be held at any time decided by council, provided all members are given prior notice of the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting, At least one week's notice is preferable if an extraordinary meeting is to be held.

Open and closed meetings

School council meetings normally are open to the school community and conducted according to standard meeting requirements. Visitors or observers can be present at the council meetings with the agreement of the principal (and a decision of council). Visitors have a right to speak but must do so through the person chairing the meeting (usually the school council president). They have no voting rights. There may be times when, for the purpose of confidentiality or other reasons, the council meeting, or part of the meeting, needs to be closed, such as when considering a principal selection report.

Extensions of meeting times

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 (e.g. 15 minutes).

A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting for that evening.

Extended leave of a member

A member of school council may apply in writing to the president for extended leave of up to three consecutive meetings. If leave is granted their lack of attendance is excluded in determining the requirement for a quorum.

Conflict of interest

If a school councillor, or an immediate family member has a direct financial interest in a matter being considered before council, that councillor:

- Must declare the conflict of interest
- Must not be present during the discussion unless invited to do so by the president
- Must not be present when a vote is taken of the matter
- May be included in the quorum for that meeting.

Agenda and notes

The agenda, minutes from the previous meeting and any notes for the meeting, such as subcommittee minutes, president's report, principal's report, will be distributed to all councillors no later than the Thursday prior to a Monday meeting.

Business arising from previous minutes and all sub-committee recommendations will be itemised in the agenda.

Moving of reports

All reports should be individually moved and seconded, as part of the standard process at each meeting.

Minutes

All decisions of council shall be recorded as minutes. Also included in the minutes are the dates and times of the meeting, those present and apologies, and an overview of key discussions.

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 chaired the meeting.

Business arising from the minutes is dealt with after the minutes have been confirmed.

Council sub-committees

Our current sub committees are:

- Finance
- Policy and Review
- Fundraising
- Facilities
- Communications

Sub-committees assist council in all the work that needs to be done. They report regularly at school council meetings, provide advice and make recommendations to council, which has the final responsibility for decisions. Sub-committees cannot make decisions for school council; rather they make recommendation to council.

Footscray West Primary School sub-committees shall consist of at least two school council representatives. The balance of the committee may consist of either school council or community representatives. The exception to this is the finance sub-committee. The finance sub-committee will include; Principal, Assistant Principal, Business Manager, Treasurer, School Council President, School Council Vice President and up to two other school councillors with interest and experience in finance. This committee is not open to general members of the school community due to the delicate nature of information discussed.

All school councillors are expected to play an active role in at least one sub-committee.

In addition our Parents and Friends' group is constituted as a parents club.

A parent club:

“Complements the role of the school council and its sub committees (but is not itself a sub-committee of school council)

Has no formally prescribed powers of duties” (DET website (Governance > Parent Clubs)