

Moonee Ponds West Primary School



School Council Standing Orders

Purpose of School Council

School Councils have specific functions under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, including to:

- establish the broad direction and vision of the school within the school community
- participate in the development and monitoring of the school strategic plan
- approve the annual budget and monitor expenditure
- develop, review and update school policies
- raise funds for school-related purposes
- maintain the school's grounds and facilities
- enter into contracts (e.g. cleaning, construction work)
- report annually to the school community and to the Department
- create interest in the school in the wider community
- inform itself and take into account the views of the community
- regulate and facilitate the after hours use of school premises and grounds
- operate a children's service at the school or other premises controlled by the Minister
- be involved in principal selection

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.

The legislative framework

School Councils operate under a framework provided by the:

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

School Councillors are also subject to the Director's Code of Conduct made under the **Public Administration Act 2004**.

Subject to this framework, a School Council may regulate its own proceedings.

School Council membership

The constituting Order of Moonee Ponds West Primary School (MPWPS) states the composition of the Council is:

- Nine (9) elected parent members, who represent more than one-third of school councillors
- Four (4) elected Department employee members. The principal who is executive officer is included in this number.
- One (1) community member. It should be noted that community membership is optional and that these positions are co-opted, rather than elected. Department employees are not eligible for co-option to this category.

Community 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 an eligible person from the relevant category who then completes the rest of the term of office of the retiring member.

Office bearers

The Regulations requires there be at least two office bearers - the president and the executive officer:

- The **president** is elected by all members of School Council and may not be a Department employee. The office of president of MPWPS council should not be open to the same person for more than four consecutive years.
- 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.

Other office bearers:

- 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, it is recommended this position should be filled by a non-Department parent member or community member.
- The convenor of the finance sub-committee is appointed by School Council. It is recommended this position be held by a non-Department parent member or a community member. This position should not be filled by the Business Manager or bursar.
- The convenor of the Education sub-committee is appointed by School Council. The position will be held by an academic member of staff from MPW who is also a school councillor.
- The minute secretary may be either an elected member of School Council or a person appointed to this role and is not a member of School Council and is therefore a silent observer with no voting rights.

Election of office bearers

Office bearers will be elected at the first meeting of the School Council after declaration of the ballot each year.

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. If a new election is held and is also tied, the School Council may decide the election by drawing lots or decide to conduct further elections until the election of office bearers is decided.

Who presides at a meeting

The President presides at meetings of School Council. 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 not be a Department employee.

Quorum

A school council meeting must operate with a quorum and a quorum must be maintained throughout the meeting. A quorum requires not less than one half of School Council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting and the majority of members present must not be 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, skype or teleconferencing. If at the end of 30 minutes after the appointed time for a school council meeting there is not a quorum, the meeting must stand adjourned to a time and place determined by the School Council members present.

Should a quorum not be achieved, Members may choose to hold the meeting, with any advice and recommendations made not being considered final until the Council meeting with quorum, at which time the advice and recommendations can be endorsed and minuted.

School Council decisions

Decisions of the Moonee Ponds 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-Department employees.

Moonee Ponds West Primary School Council will try to reach decisions by consensus but when that is not possible, a vote 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.

All decisions of council, the motions as well as the name of the person that moved the motion and the seconder, should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Tied votes

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against the decision), the president has the **casting or deciding vote**. It is therefore important that when the president offers a personal opinion on an issue, this is clearly stated. Councillors need to be able to clearly distinguish between the president's personal views and when a ruling is made as President of School Council.

Proxies and voting procedures

Eligible members of 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.

When council meetings are held

School Council meetings will be held at least twice a term on the fourth Monday of the month, from 7.00pm and will run no longer than 2 ½ hours. Typically, MPW School Council meetings run from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. The schedule of meeting dates will be agreed at the first meeting of Council each year. Meeting dates may be altered or cancelled with the agreement of a majority of Council members.

Member absence

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the Business Operations Manager and it should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Public reporting meeting

School Council must also hold at least one public meeting each year to report to the school community on the school's performance and present the Annual Report.

Extraordinary meeting

An extraordinary 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.

The president or in his/her absence, 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 council.

Open and closed meeting

While all School Council meetings are expected to be open to the school community, there may be times when the council meeting, or part of the meeting needs to be closed to protect confidentiality or privacy or for another valid reason. Should this occur, School Council will need to approve a motion to go into a "closed" session. School Council should then go back into open session once the topic under discussion has been concluded.

Visitors or observers can be present with the agreement of the principal and a decision by School Council, but they must direct all their comments through the chairperson. Visitors have no voting rights.

Extensions of meeting times

School Council meetings should require no longer than 2 ½ 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 (e.g. 15 minutes).

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

Conflict of interest

If a School Council member or immediate member of their family has any direct conflict of interest (which may be of a financial, reputational or other nature) in a subject or matter under discussion at a School Council meeting, the member:

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

School Council sub committees

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 recommendations to council.

All School Councillors are expected to play an active role in at least one sub-committee. Any School Councillor may attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee. School Council President and Principal are ex officio members of Sub-committees and are invited to attend all meetings.

Council can approve the establishment of new Sub-committees. However, the convenor and terms of reference must be approved by council.

Agendas and sub-committee reports

The School Council 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 at least 5 working days prior to the Council meeting.

Business arising from previous minutes and all sub-committee recommendations and items for decision by council will be itemised in the agenda.

Agenda items, correspondence and papers may be submitted to the Business Manager before midday on the Monday before the Council meeting. To be accepted for inclusion on the agenda, items must be within the jurisdiction of Council. Where an item is not felt to be within the jurisdiction of the Council the Principal, President (or Vice President in their absence) will contact the person who raised the issue and explain the reasons for this.

No papers or correspondence are to be submitted to the Sub-Committee on the day of the meeting unless by prior agreement with the President (or Vice President in their absence).

Minutes

Minutes are the official record of proceedings at a meeting. All decisions of council and any actions to be taken before the next meeting are recorded in the minutes.

Also included in the minutes are the date, time and venue of the meeting, those present and apologies, 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; 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.

The minutes are written up under the agenda item headings, and circulated by the principal to members before the next School Council meeting where they are considered, amended (where necessary to ensure accuracy) and confirmed.

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.

The School Council will keep the school community informed about its operations by publishing a report following each meeting in the school newsletter.

School Council principles

School councillors will at all times behave in a civil and respectful manner.

Councillors will promote:

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

Review of standing orders

These Standing Orders will be reviewed each year by School Council at the meeting following the completion of the annual School Council election process. The Standing Orders can be amended more regularly where necessary.