

School Council Standing Orders Echuca Primary School

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.

School council membership

The membership of the school council according to its constituting Order is 15 members – 8 Parent, 5 Department employees, 2 Community members.

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.

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
- Buildings and Grounds
- Grants

Other sub-committees can be formed by a motion of school council for a specified purpose and period of time at any meeting of school council.

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. All school council members must be on at least one committee.

Meetings

Regular

The school council will meet at least eight times per year and at least twice per school term on the third Monday of each month. 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. All members of school council are expected to attend no less than six meetings per year.

Echuca Primary School

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- An item of urgency that arises between meetings can be voted on via a circular email to all members at the discretion of the executive.

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; and
- (b) present the annual report published by the council; and
- (c) 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 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 of the meeting.
- The business of an extraordinary meeting will be confined to the object 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 and a majority of the members present must not be DET employees. Any parent members on the 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 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 teleconferencing.

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 the item addressed

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- Voting will normally be by a show of hands, but a secret ballot may be used for particular issues if deemed necessary by the Chair.

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 preside.
- If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the principal prior to the meeting and recorded in the minutes.

If the President and Vice President are unavailable, the meeting may elect a Chair.

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

The principal shall ensure an agenda is prepared for each regular meeting and distributed to each regular member. With the agenda 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.

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Length of meetings and extensions of meeting times

If business has not been concluded within 2 hours, the presiding member shall 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 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 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.
- When school council minutes are submitted for confirmation, only questions regarding their accuracy as a record of the meeting are to be raised.
- Business arising from the minutes is dealt with after the minutes have been confirmed.

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 talks 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.

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- 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

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 2016 Directors' Code of Conduct issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission. The Code of Conduct is based on the Victorian public sector values and requires councillors to:

- act with honesty and integrity (be truthful, open and clear about their motives and declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest and duty)
- 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 relevant facts 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 and policies (know what legislation and policies are relevant for which decisions and obey the law)
- demonstrate leadership and stewardship (set a good example, encourage a culture of accountability, manage risks effectively, exercise care and responsibility to keep the school strong and sustainable).

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Resources and links

Victorian Public Sector Commission – Code of Conduct for Directors

<http://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/code-of-conduct-for-directors/>

Department of Education and Training Values – Code of Conduct for the Victorian Public Sector

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/Public-Sector-Values.aspx>

School Policy and Advisory Guide – Ethical Decision-Making

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

