



Grovedale Primary School

Standing Orders for School Council

Introduction:

These standing orders are intended as an interim guideline and designed to help the Grovedale Primary School conduct their meetings in a productive and efficient manner.

The School Council may wish to develop further standing orders in the future.

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 Department of Education & Training (DET) guidelines, decides the future directions for the school and oversees the school's operation. School Council responsibilities include:

- Determining the education policy, goals and priorities of the school within the framework of the School Strategic Plan and DET guidelines.
- Approving the school budget, which includes school generated funds and any sponsorship arrangements, consistent with the School Strategic Plan.
- Entering into contracts for purposes consistent with School policies.
- Maintaining and improving buildings and grounds.
- Reporting annually to the school community and DET.
- Making recommendations to the DET on the appointment of the school principal.
- Authorising the employment of non-teaching staff.
- Developing the school's Dress Code and Uniform Policy.
- Demonstrating a clear understanding of the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy and the actions which must be undertaken.
- Developing the Codes of Conduct as part of the School Strategic Plan within the guidelines set by the DET.
- Ensuring that the school meets all its obligations under the Health & Safety Act.
- Ensuring procedural processes are in place and meet DET audit requirements.

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 Grovedale Primary School states the composition of the Council is:

- 6 elected parent members, who represent more than one third of school councillors
- 3 elected DET employee members. The principal who is executive officer is included in this number.
- Up to 2 of community members. It should be noted that community membership is optional and that these positions are co-opted. DET employees are not eligible for co-option to this category. Community members have the same voting rights as elected members.
- It is a requirement that all members of School Council hold a current and valid Working With Children's Check copies of these will be kept on file.

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.

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 DET employee. The office of president of Grovedale Primary School 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 potential 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 DET 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 DET parent member or a community member. This position should not be filled by the office manager / bursar.
- 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.

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 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.

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 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.

In the event of a vote being tied, the chairperson of the meeting (usually the president) has the casting vote.

If the president is absent, 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 a term. These will be normally scheduled for the third Monday of the month. Meetings will commence at 6pm. The meetings will finish no later than 8.30 p.m. unless agreed by the school council.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology prior to the meeting. The missing of two consecutive meetings without apology will be referred to the Executive Officer for follow-up and decision on future participation on School Council.

School council must also hold at least one public meeting each year to report to the school community on its activities and to present a statement of the school's income and expenditure for the previous calendar year.

An extraordinary meeting may be held at any time decided by School 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 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 business of this meeting will be confined to the subject for which it is called.

Open and closed meetings

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 recommendation (called 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

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. 30 minutes).

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

Conflict of interest

If a school councillor 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 on 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 sub-committee minutes, president's report, principal's report, will be distributed to all councillors no less than two working days before the meeting.

Child Safe Standards are a standing item for every School Council meeting.

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

General business will be included on the agenda however the President, or member chairing the meeting should be notified of the topic to be raised in General Business prior to the Council meeting commencing. This will allow the chairperson to plan for adequate time for discussion.

Minutes

All decisions of School 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.

School council decisions

Decisions of Grovedale 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.

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.

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. School council will have the following sub-committees: Finance, education & environment.

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

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*.

Meeting Protocols

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

- All members need to be listened to – you do not have to agree with all that is said but you do need to hear it and try to understand and respect it.
- Keep to the issue under discussion, not on individual people or their personalities
- Keep the focus on improving learning outcomes for students
- One conversation at a time and give your full attention to the speaker
- Council members need to make every effort to present information, opinions and feelings clearly and succinctly
- No question is too trivial. Ask questions to ensure you understand what is being said

- Avoid using language that is not easily understood by everyone – this might include educational or department jargon
- Councillors represent the entire school community, not individuals or sections of the school community
- Start and finish meetings on time.
- No ‘side conversations’ are held.
- 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 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.

Chairing Meetings Guidelines

It is the role of the chairperson to:

- Start and end each meeting on time
- Keep opening remarks welcoming but brief
- Introduce any guests, being sure to include all those presenting agenda items or those that are visitors to the meeting
- Review the agenda with council members. Outline what is to be accomplished. Keep to the agenda and the timelines
- Maintain order and focus on priorities
- Ensure that minutes of each meeting are kept
- Allow for individual input by all school councillors during discussion of agenda items
- Try to remain neutral and provide alternative ways to solve problems or make decisions
- Encourage decision making through consensus. This will enable greater commitment to the decisions made by school council
- Check that all council members have the same understanding of any decisions
- At the end of each meeting, summarize the meeting, reviewing key actions and decisions
- Remind members of the time, date, and location of the next meeting and note any items of new business to be included on that meeting’s agenda
- Reflect on the effectiveness of a meeting. Use that information to improve future council meetings.

School Council Code of Conduct

The following Code of Conduct is intended as a guide for the Grovedale Primary School. School Council members agree to observe the following principles:

- The primary considerations in making decision are the school’s values and what is in the best interests of students.
- School council is accountable to and must report to, both its local school community and the Department of Education & Training.
- School councillors will abide by all legal requirements, regulations, DET policies and guidelines.
- Conflict between school council members needs to be dealt with respectfully and fairly and in a manner that both reflects this and is seen to reflect this. That is, in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
- All councillors are expected to represent all members of the school community. Members are not there to represent just one viewpoint, or the view of an individual.

School councillors will therefore regularly seek the views and opinions of the whole school community, especially when major policies are being developed.

- School council is not an appropriate forum for the discussion of individual school staff, students, parents, or other individual members of the school community.
- A council member who is approached by a parent with a concern relating to an individual is in a privileged position and must treat such discussion with discretion, protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the people involved. If the issue relates to an operational matter of the school, the parent should be encouraged to speak with the principal or the classroom teacher. However, if the issue relates to a school policy or procedure, it should be put on the agenda for discussion at the next school council meeting, where it will be dealt with in a generic sense to protect the privacy of individuals involved.
- Councillors should respect the need for confidentiality and privacy with regard to sensitive matters that might arise at school council meetings especially where there are matters of a personal nature relating to staff, students or parents.
- Councillors should observe the need for orderly council meetings and that council needs to “speak as one voice” in the public arena, once a decision has been made.
- Councillors must declare any conflict of interest when it arises.
- School councillors will actively participate in sub-committees and meetings. If councillors are unable to attend a meeting, they are requested to submit an apology prior to the meeting.
- Members of the school community should feel welcome to attend school council meetings as observers, except where the meeting is not open to people other than school council members. Meetings can only be “closed” when the majority of school councillors vote to do so because the issue under discussion is sensitive and requires confidentiality or for the reporting back of a principal selection panel process.