



SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS POLICY

For 2020 the Minister has authorised a reduction in the minimum number of School Council meetings from eight to six meetings over the year. Further information is available at: [Reduction in minimum number of School Council meetings required for 2020](#) (login required)

Policy & Guidance

- School Council meetings must be conducted according to legislative requirements as set out in this policy and guidance material.
- School Council meetings must be held at least 8 times per year (noting the exception for 2020 outlined above), at least once each term, and achieve a quorum for a meeting to proceed.
- School Council members may be present at a meeting in person or by videoconference or teleconference.
- It is good practice to establish Standing Orders to assist in the effective and efficient operation of meetings.
- School Councils must hold a public reporting meeting at least once a year.
- Further, more detailed information on the requirements and conduct of School Council meetings is available in the Guidance tab at the website below.

Purpose

- This policy outlines requirements and good practice in relation to School Council meetings at Footscray North Primary School.

Implementation

- The Principal will ensure:

School Council meetings are:

- held at least 8 times per year (unless the Minister has approved less meetings and noting the exception for 2020 outlined above) and at least once per school term (there is no maximum number of meetings)
- achieve a quorum for a meeting to proceed (a quorum is achieved at a School Council meeting when not less than one half of the School Council members are present, and the majority are not Department employees)
- attended by members of the School Council in person or if unable to attend personally, by videoconferencing or teleconferencing
- conducted in accordance with the School Council's Standing Orders if the School Council has established any. Further information is available in the Guidance tab.
- resourced with support and relevant information by the Principal, for the efficient conduct of meetings
- open to members of the school community, unless the Council determines the need for a closed meeting or a closed component of the meeting
- School Council must:

- keep records of decisions made at Council meetings and resulting actions required and completed

School Council meetings will be chaired by:

- the President of the School Council, other than the meetings to appoint community members and elect office bearers, which are conducted by the Principal as Executive Officer, or
- the Vice-President, if the President is unable to preside. If the School Council has appointed a Vice-President and they are in attendance, the Vice-President must preside, or
- a member of the Council (other than a member who is a Department employee), if the President is unable to preside and if the School Council has not appointed a Vice-President, or the Vice-President is unable to preside at the meeting. The School Council must vote on who will preside at the meeting, or
- the school Principal, if the School Council by resolution removes the President from office. The Principal will chair the meeting to fill the position of President.

School Council will:

- call a public reporting meeting at least once a year to:
- report Council proceedings (key activities and achievements)
- present the annual report
- present a copy of the audited accounts, if the accounts have been audited

School Council office bearer positions

The positions of President and Executive Officer are mandated positions on Council. The Principal is automatically the Executive Officer of the School Council.

The President is elected by all Council members at the first meeting of the new School Council. The President is a parent or community member and chairs meetings. The Council may also elect other non-mandatory officer bearers (such as a treasurer) at the first or any following meetings.

A Department employee is ineligible to serve as President, or Vice-President, if the Council choose to elect one. The school business manager is ineligible to serve as treasurer.

Further information on School Council office bearers is available at School Council — Composition and Office Bearers.

A School Council meeting must operate with a quorum:

- a quorum requires not less than one half of School Council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting
- the majority of members present must not be Department of Education and Training 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 or teleconferencing

The Principal as Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring there are appropriate facilities if School Council members wish to attend by videoconference or teleconference.

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.

Standing Orders

A School Council may develop and approve Standing Orders to assist in the effective and efficient operation of meetings.

It is good practice to establish Standing Orders and review them each year following completion of the election process.

Standing Orders typically include a description of meeting procedures, such as the:

- length of meetings
- agenda
- Minutes
- quorum requirements
- meetings arrangements
- open and closed meetings

- effective decision-making
- member absence from meetings
- arrangements for extensions of meeting
- meeting etiquette

The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic) set out certain legal requirements in relation to conducting School Council meetings. These requirements cannot be overridden by the Standing Orders determined by a School Council.

Meeting protocols

School Council meetings will be:

- conducted in accordance with the School Council's Standing Orders
- chaired by:
 - the President of the School Council or
 - the Principal as executive officer of Council at the first School Council meeting of the new Council to appoint community members and elect office bearers chaired or
 - the Vice-President
 - if the President of the School Council is unable to preside, and
 - if a Vice-President has been appointed by the School Council, or
 - a member of the School Council (other than a Department employee member) decided by the Council
 - if the School Council has not appointed a Vice-President, or
 - the Vice-President is unable to preside at the meeting
 - provided support and resources for the conduct of meetings by the Principal as the Executive Officer of School Council
- open to the school community
- visitors or observers can be present at a Council meeting with the agreement of the Principal and a decision of Council
- there may be times when, for the purpose of confidentiality or other reasons, a Council meeting needs to be closed and the School Council determines the need for a closed meeting

Agenda

The agenda lists the business that School Council will consider at the meeting. Some items are for information only, some for discussion and others for decision.

Meeting papers should be sent approximately five days (when possible) prior to the meeting date to:

- allow School Council members to reflect on the issues
- gather more information if necessary, and
- canvass the opinions of school community members, where applicable

Most information regarding agenda topics to be discussed in Council meetings will be provided by the Principal or in reports from relevant individuals or Subcommittees.

In order to avoid the agenda being crowded with too much business, a significant amount of work may be undertaken by Subcommittees.

Reports from the Subcommittees can

- provide information and recommendations to Council, and
- are considered at Council meetings when appropriate

Further information on School Council Subcommittees is available at School Council Subcommittees.

School Councils may use the School Council sample agenda and Minutes template — also available on the Resources tab at the website below.

Minutes

School Council Minutes must be taken and should record:

- the type of meeting (regular, extraordinary or public)
- date, time and venue of meeting
- names of attendees (including visitors) and apologies received from members
- the name of presiding officer
- 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

- decisions of the meeting including motions and any amendments, names of movers and seconders
- whether the motion was carried or rejected
- the number of votes for and against
- the resulting actions required and when the actions or activities are completed

The Minutes of the School Council meeting will be:

- written up under the agenda item headings
- circulated by the Principal prior to the next meeting of Council
- confirmed as accurate at the next School Council meeting, and
- signed by the School Council President or the person who presides at the meeting

There is no right-of-access to the Minutes of a School Council meeting under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic). However, the school community should be kept informed of School Council matters by way of:

- a report in the school newsletter, and/or
- the school website

School Council may use the School Council sample agenda and meeting Minutes template — also available on the Resources tab.

Decision-making

School Councils make decisions by a majority vote of eligible members who are present (including the Principal) at a Council meeting.

Generally, the process for voting on a decision involves the following:

- A member of School Council (typically the President but can be any member of Council) asks the School Council members to approve or agree to a particular issue or decision.
- This request is called a 'motion'. An example of a motion is: 'that the School Council approves the expenditure of \$... for the purchase of ... as detailed in the quote presented by ... to Council.'
- The chair person will ask for another member of School Council to 'second' the motion to be presented to School Council.
- All School Council members will be asked to vote on whether or not to approve ('pass') the motion.
- The voting will determine if the motion is accepted or not, based on the majority of votes indicated by members present at the meeting.
- Voting can occur by a show of hands or verbally and can be done in person or via videoconference or teleconference. Where School Council decides voting is to be anonymous, members may vote on paper or by text or email sent to a designated vote receiver, provided votes are sent and received during the meeting. Records should be kept to facilitate checking if necessary.
- If votes are tied, the presiding member has a second or casting vote.
- A School Councillor's temporary absence due to a conflict of interest in a matter under discussion and decision-making does not affect the meeting quorum.
- For a School Council decision to be valid, the meeting must have a quorum. Proxies cannot be used, nor can decisions be ratified by email or any other electronic means, outside the meeting time.
- The number of votes, both for and against the motion, will be recorded in the Minutes.

Length of meetings

School Council meetings should require no longer than 2.5 hours, regardless of the setting.

If business has not been concluded by the scheduled closing time for the meeting, the Chairperson 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 School Council wants to extend the meeting

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a School Councillor's personal interests may influence, or may be seen to influence, their role and decision-making on Council.

Personal interests can also be pecuniary (financial) or non-pecuniary. Potential conflicts of interest occur where an actual conflict of interest may arise in the future.

Perceived conflicts of interest occur where a reasonable person might suspect that a School Councillor is subject to a real conflict of interest, whether or not one actually exists.

Councillors are obliged to identify these risks and take action in consultation with the Principal and the President to mitigate them.

For further information, see School Council — Conduct and Conflict of Interest.

Holding remote School Council meetings

School Councils may use telephone or video conferencing to conduct School Council meetings, including the first meeting after the poll to appoint community members and elect office bearers.

For a School Council to make a valid decision, the meeting must have a quorum and members must attend either in person or by video or telephone.

Special and first School Council meeting after the poll

The Principal chairs both:

- the special meeting to co-opt community members, held prior to the first School Council meeting
- the first School Council meeting after the declaration of the election poll to elect office bearers

Special meeting to co-opt community members

If a School Council is required to have Community members co-opted to the School Council:

- the Principal must call and preside at a special meeting for the purpose of co-opting the Community members, before office-bearers are elected
- at this special meeting, the quorum is constituted if not less than one-half of the members of School Council currently holding office are present
- If the purpose of co-option of Community members cannot be achieved at this meeting:
 - the meeting may be adjourned to a date decided by the meeting
 - the School Council may proceed to the first meeting of the School Council to elect office-bearers

First School Council meeting to elect office bearers

If a School Council is not required to have Community members co-opted to the Council, the Principal will call and preside at the first meeting of the School Council to elect a President and any other office-bearers the Council may choose to have.

A Department employee is ineligible to serve as President or Vice-President if the Council choose to elect one.

The school business manager is ineligible to serve as treasurer.

The quorum for the first meeting of the School Council to elect office bearers requires:

- not less than one half of School Council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting
- the majority of members present must not be Department of Education and Training (DET) employees

When electing office bearers

If the votes are tied, the School Council may:

- hold a new election or
- decide the election by the drawing of lots

If the votes are subsequently tied under the new election, the School Council may:

- decide the election by the drawing of lot or
- conduct further elections until the election of the officer bearers is decided

Public Reporting and Extraordinary meetings

Public Reporting Meeting

A School Council must call a public reporting meeting at least once each year, and:

- report the proceedings of the Council since the date of the previous public meeting
- present the endorsed Annual Report to the meeting, and
- if the School Council accounts have been audited, present a copy of the audited accounts

The public reporting meeting can be held during the year at a time that suits the school community and School Council activities and commitments.

Extraordinary meetings

An extraordinary meeting of a School Council may be held at a time decided by the Council if all members are given reasonable notice of the:

- time
- date
- place, and
- object of the meeting

The Council President, or in the President's absence, the Principal must call an extraordinary meeting if either of them receives a written request to do so from at least three Council members 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 the extraordinary meeting must only cover the specific matter for which it is called.

- Please refer also to the school's *School Council Liabilities & Legal Proceedings Policy*.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late July 2020).

Not a mandatory policy

School Council Approval No Longer Required

The Principal will ensure all School Councillors are aware of its contents

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/school/pal/school-council-meetings>