Moonee Ponds Primary School Standing Orders

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.

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.

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 constituting Order of Moonee Ponds Primary School states the composition of the Council is:

- Six elected parent members, who represent more than one third of school councillors
- Four elected DET employee members. The principal who is executive officer is included in this number.
- Up to Five of community members. It should be noted that community membership is optional and that these positions are co-opted, rather than elected. DET employees are not eligible for co-option to this category.

Councils are to be between six and fifteen members in total size.

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 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 Moonee Ponds 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 business 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.

Office bearers will be elected at the first meeting of the school council after declaration of the poll each year.

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.

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.

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 a matter and the number of votes for and against will be recorded in the minutes.
  - Voting will normally be by a show of hands, but a secret ballot may be used for particular issues.

Absence of the president and other members from a meeting

- If the president is unable to preside at a school council meeting, the school council will elect a member of the school council to chair the school council meeting (other than an employee of the Department).
- If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the principal prior to the meeting.

School council meetings

Unless otherwise decided, school council meetings will be held each month on the last Wednesday, from 6 – 8pm.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology prior to the meeting.

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 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

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. 15 minutes).

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

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.

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.

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 three days before the meeting.

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

Minutes

- The principal will ensure a record of each school meeting is kept and draft 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 and the number of votes for and against.
- 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 presided at the meeting.
- Business arising from the minutes is dealt with after the minutes have been confirmed.

Each month a member of school council will prepare a brief report for the school community to be published via the school newsletter. The final draft of this report will be subject to editing via the president and principal prior to publication.

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.

The school council will have the following sub-committees.

- Finance
- Education Policy
- Facilities
- Out of Hours School Care

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.

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.

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.
- 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.

Approved at March 2025 School Council Annual General Meeting.