

Belmont Primary School
School Council Standing Orders, 2018
Further DET Information to Support the Standing Orders
<http://www.schoolgovernance.vic.edu.au/>

Introduction

The School Council is a legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of the school. It plays an important role in school accountability and improvement processes and endorses the key school planning, evaluation and reporting documents.

Members of the school community are elected to School Council in line with the election guidelines as determined by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (DET) The constitution of the School Council is outlined in the Constituting Order and can only be altered once yearly with a 75% majority. The membership schedule will be reviewed regularly.

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 Belmont Primary School confirms the composition of Council as:

- 7 elected Non- DET parents
- 3 DET employees other than the Principal
- The Principal
- Up to 2 co-opted members from the school community (excluding DEECD employees) having a special interest in the school.

Elected members of Belmont Primary School have two year terms of office with half retiring annually in February/March of each year. Co-opted members of Belmont Primary School have two year terms which also terminate in March. Elections are conducted according to the Education Regulations 2007.

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.

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

- **President**
The President is elected by all members of Belmont Primary School Council and must not be a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DET) employee.
- **Principal**
The Principal is a full member of Council and apart from acting as Executive Officer, is responsible for the implementation of Council policies and for informing council on educational, statutory, regulatory and Government policy issues.

Council shall also elect from its members the following office bearers:

- **Vice President**
The Vice President is elected by all members of Belmont Primary School Council and must not be a DET employee to allow the Vice President to chair meeting in the absence of the President.
- **Treasurer**
- **Minute Secretary**

Quorum

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.

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

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 be a non DET employee.

School Council meetings

Unless otherwise decided, School Council meetings will be held twice a term on the third Wednesday of the month, from 7.00pm to 9.00pm.

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.

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 subject/purpose for which it is called.

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.

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.

Conflict of interest

If a school councillor has a direct financial or non 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.

A school councillor who considers, or would reasonably expect others to consider, that they (or another councillor) have a real or perceived potential conflict of interest with a matter being considered before council, need to identify the item and the potential conflict to council and this is to be recorded in the meeting minutes.

Any potential real or perceived conflict does not automatically require the councillor to be excluded from consideration and decision making on a specific item. Council is to consider the potential conflict and consider if it warrants the councillor to be excused from the consideration and decision of that item, any decision to excuse a councillor is to be recorded in the minutes."

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

Minutes

All decisions of 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 Belmont PS 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. Belmont PS 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. 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
- Grounds and buildings
- Other as agreed to by 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 where possible.

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**.

Further DET Information to Support the Standing Orders

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils/default.htm> .

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