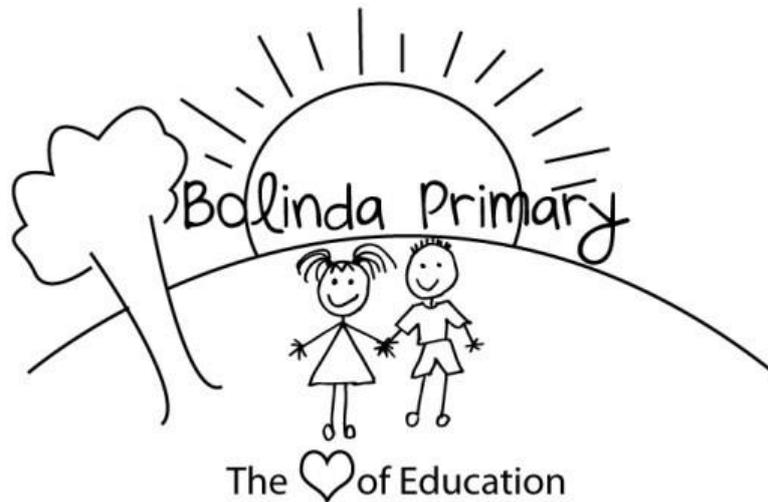


# Bolinda Primary School



## School Council Standing Orders

## Standing Orders for School Council

### **Introduction:**

These standing orders are designed to help Bolinda Primary School conduct their School Council 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 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.
- 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 composition of the Council is:

- 5 elected parent members, who represent no less than two thirds of School Councillors
- 2 elected DET employee members.
- Up to 2 community members. It should be noted that community membership is at the discretion of the Council 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. The term is 12 months with Council having the option of rolling over this period one further 12 month term.

## 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 that year's term of office.

## Office bearers

The Regulations require there be at least two office bearers – the president and the executive officer:

- The *president* is elected annually by all members of School Council and cannot be a DET employee.
- 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 *convenor of the facilities 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 *convenor of the curriculum committee* is appointed by School Council. It is recommended this position be held by a DET 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 once per month. These will be normally scheduled for the third Thursday of the month. The meeting structure is:

- 7.00pm School Council meeting, as per agreed structure (Appendix 1)
- 8.30pm School Council meeting close, unless a motion for a maximum 30 minute extension is supported by Council (see below).

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:

- elect its office bearers,
- report to the School community on its activities,
- 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.

Requests for ratification of a single School event (eg an excursion costing in excess of \$10) can be voted upon by email and/or phone vote. This will be minuted at the following School Council meeting.

## **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 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 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 of 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 (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 seven working days before the meeting.

Business arising from previous minutes and any recommendations will be itemised in the agenda.

General business will be included on the agenda by emailing the item to the Principal at least 14 days prior to the next School Council meeting so that the item can be included on the agenda. This will allow the chairperson to plan for adequate time for discussion. General Business items not included on the agenda will be included at the chairperson's discretion.

### **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.

The minutes need to be confirmed by Council as a true and accurate record of the meeting and minuted as such.

Business arising from the minutes is dealt with after the minutes have been confirmed.

### **School Council decisions**

Decisions of Bolinda 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. This would need to be put as a motion and accepted by the majority.

### **Council sub-committees**

Bolinda Primary School Council elected not to run a sub-committee system from 2018.

### **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*.

### **School Council Code of Conduct**

The following Code of Conduct is intended as a guide for Bolinda 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 and Early Childhood Development.
- School Councillors will abide by all legal requirements, regulations DET policies and guidelines.
- Conflict between School Council member's 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.

## Meeting Protocols

The following will give further clarification to School Council principles and code of conduct.

- 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.

## 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.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **School Council Agenda**

1. Start 7.00pm

Attendance:

Apologies:

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1 Confirmation of Minutes

**Moved:** **Seconded**

- 2.2 Business Arising from Minutes

**Moved:** **Seconded**

3. Finance

**Moved:** **Seconded**

4. Facilities

**Moved:** **Seconded**

5. Correspondence

**Moved:** **Seconded**

6. Reports – all read only, unless questions

- a. Principal
- b. Curriculum
- c. P & F

**Moved:** **Seconded**

7. General Business

Policies for review

**Moved:** **Seconded**

8. Next Meeting:

Meeting Closed: (8.30pm unless successful motion for a maximum 30 minute extension supported)

## Roles and Responsibilities of School Council

The role of School Council is outlined in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. In essence, the role of School Council is one of setting the long term future for the School and maintaining oversight (not management) of the School's operation. It is not about running the School – that is the job of the principal.

### The responsibilities of School Council include:

- developing the strategic plan (the document that tells people what the School wants to achieve in the future and how it plans to get there);
- approving the annual budget (the financial plan for the calendar year that tells people how the School is going to provide money so it can implement its strategic plan in that year);
- setting and reviewing policies (guiding principles designed to influence decisions, actions that the School makes);
- developing, reviewing and monitoring both the Student Code of Conduct (how the School expects students to behave, how bullying will be managed and the School's approach to managing student behaviour) and the School Dress Code (this includes how students are expected to dress during School hours including travelling to and from School, if the School has a uniform and what that looks like, and any arrangement with clothing suppliers that the School might enter into);
- raising money for things that the School needs;
- making sure the School's grounds and buildings are maintained;
- entering into contracts. eg. cleaning the School or a School Council building project;
- creating interest in the School within the community; and
- principal selection.

### What School Council does not do

- School Council does not manage the day to day running of the School. For example, it does not employ teaching staff, decide which classes students will be assigned to, or sort out issues relating to individual teachers and students and/or parents.
- School Council does not discuss individual issues relating to teachers, staff or parents – these are very clearly management roles, and therefore the principal's job.
- School Councillors are not appointed to represent specific interest groups or permit special interests to dominate the agenda of the Council.
- School Council is also not allowed to purchase land, buildings or motor cars, and it cannot enter into hire purchase agreements or obtain credit or loans, unless it is given permission by the Minister.

### Role of School Council members

- Parent members on School Council bring their experience as parents at the School and the views of the wider School community to School Council meetings.
- DET employees bring their educational expertise to School Council meetings.
- Community members, if they are on School Council, most often bring a particular skill to School Council. They might bring accounting skills or building skills or some other skill that the School is looking for at that time.

### Role of School Council President

The School Council president has four main roles. These are:

1. Be a chair of the School Council and act with the principal as Council's spokesperson and official representative on public occasions
2. Chair School Council meetings
3. Be a signatory to accounts, contracts and the School strategic plan
4. Ensure Council stays focused on improving student learning outcomes.

## Role of the principal

The principal has the overall responsibility for the education that is provided to the students and for the management of the School, within DET guidelines and government policies. Principals have a clear set of accountabilities in relation to the operation of the School.

As executive officer of School Council, the principal is responsible for:

- giving School Council timely advice about educational and other matters
- reporting annually to the School Council on the School's performance against its strategic plan
- making sure that whatever School Council decides is acted upon
- writing all correspondence authorised by School Council
- talking with the School Council president about School Council business
- making sure that School Council meetings have the assistance and resources needed to enable School Councillors to do their job
- ensuring that minutes of the meeting are recorded accurately

The principal is also:

- responsible for the overall day-to-day management of the School
- accountable for ensuring the delivery of a comprehensive education program to all students
- accountable for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the School's strategic plan
- responsible for the establishment and management of School financial systems in accordance with DET and School Council requirements
- responsible for promoting structures and processes designed to encourage cooperative School–parent, School–student and School–community relationships
- the senior DET representative for the School and, along with the School Council president, acts as spokesperson for the School and as the School's representative at public events.

## What is an Annual Budget?

An annual budget is a financial plan for the calendar year. It tells people how the School is going to provide money so it can implement its strategic plan in that year.

The annual budget tells people:

- The total money available to the School for that year
- How the School is going to use its money to support the strategic plan
- The plans for each particular program (for example English, Maths) operating in the School.

All Victorian government Schools are required to develop an annual budget. It is one of the School's key plans. Schools have limited money so it is important to use resources as efficiently as possible. The School Council works to get the best results for its money through a carefully planned annual budget.

## What should be in the Annual Budget?

The total money available to the School for that year. This includes:

- What the School gets from the Government in the Student Resource Package (SRP)
- Money in the bank in various accounts
- Money raised from voluntary contributions, bank interest, fund-raising activities and other sources.

## How is the Annual Budget usually developed?

- All programs are reviewed and draft plans for the following year are created, together with a spending plan for each program
- While this is happening, the School works out the total money it will have available to it for the coming year. This should consider not only new money the School will make in the new year, but also funds brought forward from previous years, regardless of whether they are committed or uncommitted.
- Once the School knows how much money is available, the school council matches the money available against all the cost estimates and spending plans to work out what it will be able to (and what it should) fund.

- The priorities for funding have already been worked out in the School's strategic plan
- Once all the available money has been allocated, the school council should create a list of future priorities to fund when more money is available
- The annual budget should then be fully documented and when ready, submitted to school council for discussion and approval.

### **What is School Council's role?**

School Council is responsible for approving the annual budget. Once it is in operation, Council should regularly monitor the budget's progress to make sure it is on track. A School's Operating Statement is the key report School Council should use to monitor the budget's progress.

### **What is the Student Resource Package?**

The Student Resource Package (SRP) refers to the money provided to every Victorian Government School each year by the Government. Schools have been funded this way (with the SRP) since 2005. The money is given to Schools so they can bring about improvement in learning outcomes for students. It is linked to individual student learning needs rather than providing funds for a certain number of staff or equipment.

The money is provided as cash and credit funds (kept in an account for the School to draw against for staff and other resource costs). Schools receive their cash share of the SRP in instalments each quarter (every three months). This is usually known as the quarterly grant. It is used to pay for the School's running cost, such as electricity, gas, telephone, rates, cleaning and minor works.

Most of the money (94%) is provided as credit and the rest is provided as cash (6%). The School doesn't actually get the credit funds. DET keeps a record of how much it has placed in credit for each School. This credit is used to pay for the School's staff, including leadership costs, teacher salaries, non-teacher support staff, professional development, replacement teachers, payroll tax, the workcover levy and superannuation.

Most of the money is allocated on a per-student basis. The package is made up of:

- student-based funding
- School-based funding
- targeted initiatives.

The student-based funding takes into account the levels of Schooling of students (such as prep level, year one, year seven, or VCE), and their family and community characteristics. It includes amounts to cover core student learning (usual School programs) as well as equity. Equity funding is extra money to help with such things as programs for students with disabilities and English as a Second Language programs.

School-based funding is provided to cover School facility costs, cleaning, workcover, as well as programs specific to individual Schools, such as Prep to Year 12 Schools and Schools with a facility for deaf students.

Targeted initiatives money is for programs with a definite purpose and/or for a limited period, such as primary welfare programs, language support programs and Leading Schools funding.

School Council is responsible for approving the annual budget. This annual budget is the financial plan for the calendar year. The total money available to the School for that year includes the cash provided in the Student Resource Package.

One of the Principal's most important roles is to develop and manage the School's staffing plan with the credit share of the SRP.