

# Example Standing Orders for School Councils

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**Introduction:** These standing orders are intended as a guideline only. They are designed to help School councils run their meetings in a productive and efficient manner. School councils may wish to develop their own standing orders.

## Example Standing Orders

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### 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 DEECD 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.

### School council membership

The constituting Order of <school's name> states the composition of the Council is:

- <number> elected parent members, who represent more than one third of school councillors
- <number> elected DEECD employee members. The principal who is executive officer is included in this number.
- Up to <number> of community members. It should be noted that community membership is optional and that these positions are co-opted, rather than elected. DEECD 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 DEECD employee. The office of president of <name> 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 DEECD 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 DEECD 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 DEECD employees. Any parent members on school council who also work for the Department are counted as DEECD 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

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 DEECD employee.

## School council meetings

Unless otherwise decided, school council meetings will be held twice a term on the <number of the week> – for example, third – <day of the week> – for example, Wednesday, from <the outlined time> - for example, 7 – 9pm.

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.

## 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 one 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 <name> school council will be by a majority of those eligible to vote and who are present at the meeting, where the majority are non DEECD members.

<Name> 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.

## 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**.