

## **School Council Standing Orders - March 2024**

### **Rationale**

School Council is the legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of Lalor East Primary School. It is the major governing body of the school that, within the Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines, decides the future directions for the school and oversees the school's operation.

School Councils operate under a framework provided by the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act);
- Education and Training Regulations 2007 (the Regulations);
- Ministerial Order 1280: Ministerial Order (Constitution of Government School Councils) 2020.
- Individual school's Constituting Order

Subject to this framework, the Lalor East Primary School Council may regulate its own proceedings.

### **School Council Membership**

The Constituting Order of Lalor East Primary School states the composition of the Council is:

- nine (9) elected parent members, who represent more than one third of school councillors;
- four (4) elected DET employee members. The Principal who is the Executive Officer is an additional DET employee member;
- two (2) community members; at the discretion of school council. The community position is co-opted. The community member has the same voting rights as elected members. DET employees are not eligible for co-option to this category.

### **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. Expressions of interest from the appropriate category will be sought prior to co-option.

### **Office bearers**

The Regulations require there be at least two office bearers; the School Council President and the Executive Officer. Office bearers will be elected at the first meeting of the school council after declaration of the poll each year and following a special meeting to co-opt community members.

- The School Council President is elected by all members of school council and may not 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.

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.

### **Additional 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 School Council President, this position is filled by a non DET parent member or community member.
- The Treasurer of school council (convenor of the Finance sub-committee) is appointed by school council and is a non DET parent member or a community member. This position should not be filled by the office manager or business manager.
- 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. If the minute secretary is not a member of school council, they are considered an 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 DET 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 in person or by video conferencing or teleconferencing.

### **Request for leave**

A member of a school council may apply in writing to the president for extended leave of up to three (3) consecutive meetings. If leave is granted to a member, his/her membership is excluded in determining the requirement for a quorum of not less than half the members of the school council currently holding office.

If a school council member is not present for three (3) meetings and does not lodge an apology, their membership may be terminated.

### **Tied votes**

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against the decision), the School Council President has the casting or deciding vote. It is therefore important that when the School Council President offers a personal opinion on an issue, this is clearly stated. Councillors need to be able to clearly distinguish between the School Council President's personal views and when a ruling is made as School Council President of school council.

### **Proxies**

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.

### **If the School Council President is absent**

In the absence of the School Council President, the Vice President must chair the school council meeting. If neither the School Council 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 on the second Tuesday of the month from 6:30pm – 8:30pm, unless that day falls during school holidays, the day after a public holiday or the first week back following a term holiday.

A schedule outlining the dates for School Council meetings will be made available at the first meeting of that year. These dates will also be published online. Subject to the agenda items, the School Council may determine to meet exclusively online via video conference. This will be communicated to School Council members prior to the meeting.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology to the Executive Officer (School Principal) prior to the meeting.

## **Public Reporting – Annual General 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. The Annual General Meeting is usually held in late March.

## **Extraordinary Meeting**

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 move 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 15 minutes. If required, a further extension of 10 minutes may be sought. A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting for that evening.

## **Conflict of interest**

If a school councillor has a conflict of interest (financial, personal or other) 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 School Council President;
- must not be present when a vote is taken on the matter;
- may be included in the quorum for that meeting.

## **Agenda and Reports**

Anyone wishing to place an item on the agenda for school council needs to lodge this with the Principal (as the Executive Officer) by 9am two business days prior to the scheduled meeting (Usually the Friday before). The agenda and minutes from the previous meeting and any notes for the meeting, such as sub-committee minutes or reports will be distributed to all councillors on the Friday prior to the scheduled meeting. Business arising from previous minutes and all sub-committee recommendations will be itemised in the agenda.



## **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.

A motion is required at the beginning of meeting to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Once approved, the minutes must be signed by the Executive Officer and the School Council President and be stored in accordance with DET policy.

## **School Council Decisions**

Decisions of 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. Lalor East Primary 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. Proxy votes are not permitted. When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against a decision), the president (presiding member) has a second or casting vote.

## **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 establishment of the sub-committees of the School Council at Lalor East Primary School will occur annually at the first meeting of the newly elected council. There are to be at least three (3) people on a sub-committee that includes at least one (1) elected school council member. A written report is to be written by the sub-committee and tabled at school council. Sub-committees should meet at least one week prior to the school council meeting.

## **School Council Principles**

School Councillors must abide by the 2016 Directors' Code of Conduct issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission. The Code of Conduct is based on the Victorian public sector values and requires councillors to:

- act with honesty and integrity (be truthful, open and clear about their motives and declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest and duty)
- act in good faith in the best interests of the school (work cooperatively with other councillors and the school community, be reasonable, and make all decisions with the best interests of students foremost in their minds)
- act fairly and impartially (consider all relevant facts of an issue before making a decision, seek to have a balanced view, never give special treatment to a person or group and never act from self interest)
- use information appropriately (respect confidentiality and use information for the purpose for which it was made available)
- use their position appropriately (not use their position as a councillor to gain an advantage)
- act in a financially responsible manner (observe all the above principles when making financial decisions)



- exercise due care, diligence and skill (accept responsibility for decisions and do what is best for the school)
- comply with relevant legislation and policies (know what legislation and policies are relevant for which decisions and obey the law)
- demonstrate leadership and stewardship (set a good example, encourage a culture of accountability, manage risks effectively, exercise care and responsibility to keep the school strong and sustainable).

School council members that do not comply with these principles may have their membership terminated.

### Meeting Etiquette

The protocols below will help to ensure the smooth running and operation of school council meetings:

- only one person talks at a time
- all requests to speak are directed to the chairperson
- all speakers are listened to in respectful silence
- no 'side conversations' are held
- members 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 chairperson indicates that the topic of discussion is closed, no further comments are made
- no-one uses jargon or insider knowledge
- all electronic devices (such as mobile phones and pagers) are silenced and no calls are taken during the meeting
- regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic, everyone stays calm.

### Communications

These Standing Orders will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Discussed at the first meeting of the newly elected School Council each year
- Available publicly on our school's website
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request
- Displayed and accessible in School Council Meeting locations

### Review

These standing orders are to be reviewed annually following the appointment of new school council members, changes to legislation or Department guidelines or at times the Principal or School Council President forms the belief that they warrant review.

<b>Updated</b>	March 2024
<b>Consultation</b>	School Council
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Linda Richards, Principal Carly Georgakopoulos, School Council President
<b>Endorsed on</b>	26 March 2024
<b>Next review date</b>	March 2025

