STANDING ORDERS

FOR THE

SCHOOL COUNCIL

OF

ESSENDON NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL ON 17th/3/2014
1.) Purpose of School Council

Standing Orders for the School Council of Essendon North Primary School  

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The School Council plays an important role in assisting with the efficient governance of the school. Being a member of the school council is a rewarding and challenging experience. Acting as a team, council supports the principal to provide the best possible educational outcomes for all students.

School Council’s decisions affecting the students and their learning is made having regard, as a primary consideration, to their best interests. Council also must comply with any requirements of the relevant Act, the regulations, a Ministerial Order or a direction, guideline or policy issued under the Act.

2.) The Legislative Framework

School Council operates under a framework provided by the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Education and Training Regulations 2007

It is important that school councillors understand the key features of the legislation because it affects all aspects of their work: how they interact with the community, consider options, make decisions and generally how they conduct themselves. This strengthens community confidence in the school and helps to protect and build the school’s reputation.

3.) The Roles and Responsibilities of School Council (see Appendix I)

The role of school council is outlined in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. In essence, the role of school council is to support the principal in setting the long-term future for the school. The types of responsibilities for school council include:

- Participates in the development of the school strategic plan
- Approves the strategic plan which is then signed by the president
- Monitors the progress of school strategic plan against the goals
- Approves the annual budget
- Ensures appropriate internal controls are in place
- Monitors school expenditure
- Approves requests for voluntary contributions and school fees
- Approves and monitors investments
- Develops the broad direction and vision for the school using guidelines provided by DEECD
- Develops, monitors, reviews and updates policies
- Develops Student Engagement Policy and Student Dress Code
- Consults with the school community before adopting changes to these policies
- Approves employment of some staff (e.g. casual replacement teachers and support staff)
- Allocates contract for school cleaning
- Enters contracts for building and grounds improvements
- Promotes the school to the wider community
- Works with school community to stimulate interest in the school
- Makes a recommendation to the Secretary regarding principal selection

**School council does not:**

- Manage the day to day running of the school that includes all operational processes and procedures.
- Discuss individual issues relating to teachers, staff or parents – these are very clearly management roles, and therefore the principal's job.
- Represent specific interest groups or permit special interests to dominate the agenda of the council.
- 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.

**4. The Role of a School Councillor**

- 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.
- DEECD employees bring their educational expertise to school council meetings.
- Community members, if they are on school council, most often bring a particular skill or area of expertise.

**5. School Council Membership**

The constituting order of School Council states that the composition is as follows:

- Six (6) elected parent members, who represent more than one third of school Councillor
- Four (4) elected DEECD employee members. The principal as Executive Officer is included in this number.
- Up to two (2) coopted community members. Community member positions are optional and are co-opted, rather than elected. DEECD employees are not eligible for this category.

School Council has twelve (12) positions.

**a.) Casual Vacancies**
Should a casual vacancy occur on council, this vacancy may be filled by co-opting a person from the appropriate category who then completes the rest of the term of office of the retiring member. Council reserves the right not to fill a vacancy if an appropriate candidate is not available or remaining term of the vacancy is of insufficient length to benefit the Council.

b.) Office Bearers

School Council will have the following office bearer positions:

- The President is elected by all members of school Council and may not be a DEECD employee. The office of President should not be open to the same person for more than four consecutive years.

- The Vice President is elected by all members of Council. As the Vice President may need to chair a meeting in the absence of the President, this position should be filled by a non DEECD parent member or community member.

- 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 Councillor.

- 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.

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

School Council may choose to have a Treasurer that is elected by Council members but cannot be a DEECD member or DEECD parent member. The School Council may also decide that the President fulfill this role.

c.) 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.

d.) Roles and Responsibilities of Office Bearers

School Council President

The school council president has five main roles. These are:

1. Act with the principal as council’s spokesperson and official representative on public occasions
2. Chair school council meetings
3. Be a signatory to school contracts and the school’s strategic plan
4. Uphold all council decisions and work in partnership with the principal
5. Ensure council stays focused on improving student learning outcomes.

The school council president may also participate as an ex officio member of all sub-committees established by
school council. This means that because of his/her official position, the school council president is a member of all committees.

The school council president needs to be able to effectively chair meetings. This means:

- Ensuring council meetings are run efficiently and achieve their purpose
- Ensuring that meeting processes comply with the school’s standing orders
- Preparing the agenda and relevant papers with the principal
- Ensuring the minutes from the previous meeting are accurate, and then signing and dating those minutes
- Starting and finishing the meeting on time
- Notifying council of any apologies received
- Tabling all correspondence, inwards and outwards
- Making sure that all councillors have a chance to have their say and that decisions are properly understood and recorded
- Ensuring that new councillors receive an appropriate induction to enable them to participate fully
- Facilitating the resolution of any conflict that may arise within a council meeting

**Vice President**

- Act as Chairperson in the absence of the President and otherwise represent the President as required

**Treasurer (if elected)**

- Ensure that the school finances are in accordance with DEECD guidelines
- Ensure that relevant internal control procedures are maintained
- Work with the principal and the finance committee to develop budget recommendations to submit to council for approval
- Present financial reports and finance committee recommendations to council

**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 DEECD guidelines and government policies. The principal has 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
- Being an ex-officio member of all school council sub-committees. This means that because of his/her official position, the principal is a member of all sub-committees.

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 development, implementation and evaluation of the school's strategic plan
- Responsible for the establishment and management of school financial systems in accordance with the Victorian DEECD policies and guidelines
- Responsible for the development of the budget
- Responsible for promoting structures and processes designed to encourage the development of a high quality professional learning community (students, staff, parents and the wider community)
- The senior DEECD 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.

6.) School Council Meetings

The number of Council meetings held during the year will be in accordance with DEECD regulations. On average, school council will meet twice per term.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology prior to the meeting. If a member misses three (3) consecutive meetings, their membership may be terminated upon decision (motion) of the Council. Resignation of membership must be in writing to the President who will table at the next meeting for acceptance and recording.

The school will 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.

a.) Agenda

The principal shall ensure an agenda is prepared for each regular meeting and distribute the agenda, draft minutes from the previous meeting and meeting papers such as sub-committee reports no less than three days before the meeting.

b.) 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.

c.) Open and Closed Meetings

School council meetings will generally be open to the school community but the principal and school council may decide that only members may be present at a meeting or part of a meeting.

If the meeting is open, visitors may speak by invitation of the presiding member.

d.) Length of Meetings and Extensions of Meeting Times

If business has not been concluded within 1.5 hours, the presiding member shall ask the members whether they wish to defer the rest of the business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting. A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting. The meeting will be extended for no more than 30 minutes.

e.) 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.

f.) 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 DEECD 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.

**g.) 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 DEECD employees. Any parent members on the 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 at a council meeting, in person or by video conferencing or teleconferencing.

**h.) Tied Votes**

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against the decision), the President has a second or casting vote.

**i.) 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.

**j.) Extraordinary Meetings**

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 object for which it is called.

**k.) Public Reporting (Annual) Meeting**

The school council will call a public meeting in March each year and at that meeting will:

1. Report the proceedings of the council for the period since the date of the previous public meeting;
2. Present the annual report published by the council; and
3. If the accounts of the school council have been audited, present a copy of the audited accounts.
7.) School Council Sub-Committees

a.) The Role of Sub-Committees

- Assist council in the work that needs to be done. They report regularly at school council meetings, provide advice and make recommendations to school council which has the final responsibility for decisions. **Sub-committees cannot make decisions for school council, rather they make recommendations to council**

- Are open to non school council members and therefore provide opportunities to involve people in the school who are not members of school council

- However, council cannot delegate any of its functions or powers in relation to the approval of the school’s budget and yearly financial statements to the finance sub-committee – this stays the responsibility of school council

- The Council sub-committees sometimes have working parties that are set up for a specific task for a set period of time. An example of a working party might be related to the development of a policy – for example a “healthy eating” working party or a “sun smart” working party. Working parties are covered by the same rules as sub-committees. They cannot make decisions but instead make recommendations to either a sub-committee or school council.

b.) Structure of Sub-Committees

- Each sub-committee has a nominated convenor who is usually a school council member

- All school councillors should be involved in at least one sub-committee

- Sub-committees can be open to non school council members

- Sub-committees usually meet between regular school council meetings. This gives them time to look at what has been happening in their particular area of responsibility and consider any action or follow-up that needs to be taken.

c.) Role of Sub-Committee Convenor

- Be the chairperson for that sub-committee and report to the full school council at the next scheduled meeting

- Ensure a written report with recommendations is provided to the principal to be included in the school council notes prior the next school council meeting

- Ensure implementation of approved recommendations are monitored

- Encourage participation from the school community and co-opt parent members or local community members when required.
d.) Terms of Reference for Sub-Committees

- **Buildings and Grounds** – planning and developing the school's facilities such as its buildings and grounds; organising working bees and other actions to maintain or improve the appearance of the school.

- **Education and Policy** – developing the educational policy for school council including camps and excursions, student welfare, student leadership and professional development. It involves developing school wide policies such as occupational health and safety, anti-discrimination and integration policies; monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan; reviewing school data such as NAPLAN assessment and school level data

- **Community Building and Fundraising (FOEN)** – developing ways for the school to work more actively with its community, including parents and carers and the wider community; developing fundraising activities for the school, including sponsorship for school events and developing school functions to build the school community.

- **Finance** - develop the school’s annual budget with the help of the principal; ensure that the annual budget supports the school strategic plan; present the recommended budget to council for approval and adoption; regularly monitor and report to council on progress against the budget; ensure there is an adequate internal control system to promote operational efficiency and to minimise financial risk; ensure that the school has an appropriate investment policy and that this policy is approved by council annually; make recommendations to council on fund-raising activities and liaise with the school groups concerned with these activities; where required, assist in the completion of school tenders e.g. cleaning contracts, waste removal contracts, school council building contracts; review the annual audited financial statement and the auditor’s report and assist with follow up where appropriate; assist the principal in ensuring that the school operates to a balanced budget and that all liabilities and financial commitments are brought to account in the relevant year.

e.) Working Parties

Council may approve the formation of working parties to assist the work of Council as required. Working parties are to be formed for a specific purpose and duration.
8.) Code of Conduct for School Councillors

School councils in Victoria are public entities as defined by the *Public Administration Act 2004*. School councillors must abide by the Directors’ Code of Conduct issued by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. The code of conduct requires councillors to:

- Act with honesty and integrity (be truthful, open and clear about their motives and declare any conflict of interest should it arise)
- Act in good faith in the best interests of the school (work cooperatively with the school’s educational professionals and community, be reasonable, and make all decisions with the best interests of students foremost in their minds)
- Act fairly and impartially (consider all sides 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 (know what legislation is relevant for which decisions and obey the law)
- Demonstrate leadership and stewardship (set a good example, exercise care and responsibility to keep the school strong and sustainable)

*Indemnity for school council members*

School councillors are indemnified against any liability in respect of any loss or damage suffered by the council or any other person in respect of anything necessarily or reasonably done, or omitted to be done by the councillor in good faith in:

a) The exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a member

b) The reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a member.

In other words, school councillors are not legally liable for any loss or damage suffered by council or others as a result of reasonable actions taken in good faith.
APPENDIX 1

Who Does What: School council or principal?

Understanding the functional split between possible school council activities and principal activities is critical for the effective functioning of council.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>School Council Activities</th>
<th>Principal Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Planning</strong></td>
<td>- Participates in the development of the school strategic plan</td>
<td>- Leads the development of the strategic plan, consulting with the staff and the school community</td>
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<td>- Approves the strategic plan which is then signed by the president</td>
<td>- Signs the strategic plan, acknowledging responsibility for its implementation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Monitors the progress of school strategic plan against the goals</td>
<td>- Implements and monitors the school strategic plan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finances / Budget</strong></td>
<td>- Approves the annual budget</td>
<td>- Leads the development of the annual budget</td>
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<td>- Ensures appropriate internal controls are in place</td>
<td>- Manages the day to day financial running of the school</td>
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<td>- Monitors school expenditure</td>
<td>- Ensures, with the convener of the finance committee, appropriate financial reports are presented to council</td>
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<td>- Approves requests to parents for voluntary contributions and school fees</td>
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<td>- Approves and monitors investments</td>
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<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>- Develops the broad direction and vision for the school using guidelines provided by DEECD</td>
<td>- Leads curriculum development and implementation</td>
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<td>- Determines teacher, subject and time allocations, timetable, class sizes and structures</td>
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<td><strong>Policies</strong></td>
<td>- Develops, monitors, reviews and updates policies</td>
<td>- Implements policies endorsed by school council</td>
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<td><strong>Student Management</strong></td>
<td>- Develops Student Engagement Policy and Student Dress Code</td>
<td>- Implements these policies</td>
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<td>- Consults with the school community before adopting changes to these policies</td>
<td>- Considers and, where appropriate, grants exemptions to dress code</td>
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<td><strong>Staff Employment</strong></td>
<td>- Approves employment of some staff e.g. casual replacement teachers and support staff</td>
<td>- Manages all matters of student wellbeing, discipline, academic progress</td>
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<td>- Recommends to the Secretary the appointment of a principal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Management</strong></td>
<td>- No role</td>
<td>- Responsible (as delegate of the Secretary) for the employment of persons in the Teaching Service (including non-teaching staff)</td>
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<td><strong>Buildings &amp; Grounds</strong></td>
<td>Allocates contract for school cleaning</td>
<td>- Responsible for all aspects of staff management such as: allocation of work, leave approval, performance management, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enters contracts for building and grounds improvements</td>
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<td><strong>School-Community Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Promotes the school to the wider community</td>
<td>Represents DEECD to the wider community</td>
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<td>Works with school community to stimulate interest in the school</td>
<td>- Engages the school community and develops links with broader community</td>
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