



STANDING ORDERS

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.

The legislative framework

School councils operate under a framework provided by the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act)
- Education and Training Regulations 2017 (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 Bass Coast Specialist School states the composition of the Council is:

- 5 elected parent members.
- 2 elected DET employee members. The Principal who is Executive Officer is included in this number.
- 2 mandated student members. All schools with year 7 students and above have a mandated student member category. Bass Coast Specialist School has an exemption until the end of 2020.

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 cannot be a DET employee. The office of president of Bass Coast Specialist 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 DET parent member or community member.

The Bass Coast Specialist School office bearer positions are:

- President
- Vice president
- Treasurer

The minute secretary will be the Business Manager who is appointed to this role, who is not a member of School Council and therefore has no voting rights.

Office bearers will be elected at the first meeting of the School Council after declaration of the poll each year.

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.

School Council Meetings

Regular

The School Council will meet twice a term on the third Monday of each month, if practical. The meeting will commence at 5.00pm and will finish no later than 7.00pm unless agreed by the school council. Meetings will be held in the staffroom unless advised otherwise.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology to the Principal prior to the meeting.

It is expected that councillors will regularly attend meetings and thoroughly peruse all emailed reports prior to each meeting.

Public Reporting (Annual) meeting

The School Council will call a public meeting at least once 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
- (b) present the annual report published by the council
- (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.

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 subject 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 three 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 subject of the meeting.

The business of an extraordinary meeting will be confined to the subject for which it is called.

Quorum for meetings

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.

If at the end of 30 minutes after the appointed time for a School Council meeting there is not a quorum, the meeting must stand adjourned to a time and place determined by the School Council members present.

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 DET 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.

School Councillors need to ensure their vote is based solely on the best interests of the students. All decisions of Council, the motions as well as the name of the person that moved the motion and the seconder, should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

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.

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.

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.

Member absence

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the executive officer (the Principal) and it should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

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.

The declaration of interest will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

Extended leave of council member

A member of a school council may apply in writing to the president for extended leave of up to three 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.

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, principal's and president's report to school council members no less than five days before the meeting.

Open and closed meetings

While all School Council meetings would normally 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.

Length of Meetings and Extensions of meeting times

If business has not been concluded within 2.5 hours, 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 two 10 minute periods of time.

A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting for that evening.

Minutes

All decisions of council shall be recorded as minutes and these minutes shall be sent to council members within two weeks of the meeting. Also included in the minutes are the dates and times of the meeting, those present and apologies, inward and outward correspondence and reports of any sub-committees tabled at the meeting, an overview of key discussions and decisions of the meeting including motions and any amendments, names of movers and seconders and whether the motion was carried or rejected.

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

Conduct of meetings

School councillors will at all times behave in a civil and respectful manner and in accordance with the School Council Code of Conduct. At Bass Coast Specialist School our 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.

In the conduct of meetings, members will observe the following etiquette:

- Only one person talks at a time.
- All requests to speak are directed to the presiding member.
- All speakers are listened to in respectful silence.
- No 'side conversations' are held.
- Members shall 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 presiding member indicates that the topic of discussion is closed, no further comments are made.
- Members shall not use jargon.
- Members will ensure that all electronic devices (such as mobile phones) are silenced and no calls are taken during the meeting.
- Members shall stay calm regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic.

Developed and approved by the Bass Coast Specialist School Council

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