



# Standing Orders for Barnawartha Primary School Council 2025

## 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 principles

At all times the members are advocates of our school and their actions do not put the school into disrepute personally or encourage others to do so. It is expected that members protect the reputation that has been established within the school and community of Barnawartha and model a high standard of effective communication and problem solving abilities.

## Conduct at meetings

Councillors abide by the *Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities* issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commissioner and locally agreed etiquette.

## School Council Principles

- Respectful partnerships
- Clear and honest two way communication
- Transparent processes
- Democratic, informed decision making
- Personal and professional integrity

In the conduct of meetings, the following etiquette will be observed by members:

- Only one person speaks at a time
- All requests to speak are listened to in respectful silence
- No 'side conversations' are held
- Members will listen to the discussion carefully in order to avoid making points that have already been made or asking questions that have already been answered.
- When the presiding member indicates that the topic of discussion is closed, no further comments are made.
- Members will not use jargon
- Members will ensure that all electronic devices (mobile phones) are silenced and no calls are taken during the meeting.
- Members stay calm regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic.
- Members maintain and respect the confidentiality of our meetings.

## School council meetings

School council meetings will be held (minimum) twice a term on the **last Tuesday of the month** from **6:00pm-7.00 p.m.** The meeting dates will be posted on uEducateUs events calendar and emailed to community members.

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

### **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.

For further information, go [www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils/role.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils/role.htm)

### **School council membership**

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

- 5 elected parent members, who represent two thirds of school councillors
- 3 elected DET employee members. The principal who is executive officer is included in this number.
- 2 Community member -It should be noted that community membership positions are co-opted, rather than elected, and are for a period of 12 months. DET employees are not eligible for co-option to this category. 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 Barnawartha Primary School Council should not be open to the same person for more than four consecutive years. Unless in the event that no other members wish to nominate, then the current president can nominate themselves for re-election for 12 months.
- 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, this position should be filled by a non DEECD member.
- A **minute secretary** who is an elected member of school council or a person appointed to this role who is not a member of school council may be nominated to undertake this task.

## **SUB COMMITTEES -**

- **Finance** - consist of the Principal, President, Business manager (minimum)
- **Grounds and Maintenance (physical environment)**
- **Fundraising**

## **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.

## **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.

## **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 **Annual Report**, 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 prior to the meeting. Agenda will be confirmed at the beginning of the meeting.

All General Business must be listed on the agenda prior to distribution.

Sub-committee reports 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 the Barnawartha 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.

Barnawartha 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.

## 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. As the need arises, sub-committees may co-opt a person(s) with relevant expertise to work with that sub-committee.

Thank you for being part of our council.