



Governance

Improving School Governance

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1.0 Introduction

Goal

This module provides participants with an understanding of:

- the framework within which school councils operate
- what school councils do
- school council operations
- important features of the school.

Overview

School councils play a key role in Victorian government schools and being a member of the school council is a rewarding and challenging experience. Acting as a team, the council supports the principal to enhance the educational opportunities for students.

Good governance strengthens community confidence in the school and school council and helps to ensure the council's reputation is maintained and enhanced. Good governance enables the council to perform efficiently and effectively and to respond strategically to changing demands and educational challenges.

Good governance relies on the professional leadership of the principal, who is a council member and the council's executive officer, the school council president and the school council. The establishment and implementation of appropriate processes achieve a balance between formal meeting procedures and a friendly atmosphere of cooperation. Council members can strengthen their performance by developing their skills, knowledge and contributions through professional development.

Overview continued

Although each councillor brings their own valuable life experience and knowledge to the role, councillors may need to develop skills and acquire knowledge in areas that may be unfamiliar to them. These might include developing an understanding of strategic planning, interpreting data or financial statements, working effectively as a council or understanding legislative and policy requirements.

This training module will help councillors understand their roles and responsibilities and develop the skills and knowledge to perform their governance tasks successfully.

In addition to this governance module, there are other modules to support councillors in the areas of strategic planning, finance, policy and review and school council president. There is also a training presentation on the Department's website, for principals and school staff, to help them understand their obligations under the Child Safe Standards. It is recommended the school council should be informed of the Child Safe Standards and their obligations, by reviewing the presentation annually with the principal. Department log-in is required.

1.1

Legislative framework

Why is this topic important?

School councils operate within the Victorian government school system under a legislative framework.

The system has a strong history of establishing efficient and effective mechanisms that:

- meet the expectations of Victorians for well-governed schools
- reflect local community and Department of Education and Training (the Department) Values
- meet the needs of local communities served by particular schools.

On completing this unit, school councillors should:

- know the legal requirements which apply to school councils
- understand the framework under which they operate.

Legislation

The Government school system is administered by a combination of the Minister for Education (Minister), the Secretary of the Department, the Department and school councils.

The Minister has overall responsibility, with the Secretary, Department and school councils separately accountable to the Minister for the performance of their functions.

All school councils in Victoria are established under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (the Act) and operate under the Act and Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (the Regulations).

Each school council is established by Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils, which, together with the Act and Regulations, specifies the council's membership, size and composition; its objectives, powers, functions and accountabilities; and the role of its executive officer, who is the principal.

Constitution of Government School Councils

Coming into operation on 1 January 2021, the new Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils consolidates existing school council constituting Orders with global Ministerial Orders such as Ministerial Order 52, the school council composition and elections Order, into a single Order. The objectives, functions and powers of school council remain set out in the Act.

School councillors are also subject to the Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities made under the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

As a corporate body, school councils may exercise and discharge the powers, duties and functions given to them by or under the Act. As such, school councils are separate legal entities from the Department.

The Secretary, Department of Education and Training, is required to ensure there is an effective quality assurance regime over the financial and operational activities of school councils. The Secretary is also required to advise the Minister on matters relating to school councils and work with and provide guidance to councils to assist them in their operation. The Secretary, however, cannot direct or control a school council in the performance of its functions.

It is important that school councillors understand the key features of the relevant legislation because it affects all aspects of their work: including how they interact with the community, develop and consider options, make decisions and generally conduct themselves both during and outside of council meetings.

A well-informed and effective school council strengthens community confidence in the school and helps to protect and build the school's reputation.

School councils that oversee or operate an outside school hours care (OSHC) or kindergarten service also need to understand the different legislative framework that applies.



The National Quality Framework provides a national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of early childhood education and care services, which includes OSHC and kindergarten services. The National Quality Framework (NQF) includes:

- the National Law and National Regulations (the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*)
- the National Quality Standard
- the assessment and quality rating process
- national learning framework – *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Aged Care in Australia and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.*

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority supports the implementation of the National Quality Framework and works with state and territory regulatory authorities to implement and administer this framework.

School councils hold a duty under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to ensure that the school, as a workplace, is, so far as reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health.

This means that the duty will extend to all matters over which school council has management and control. This includes matters such as engagement of goods and services, oversight of the management of contracts, and the maintenance of school buildings, grounds and facilities. The duty extends to all persons affected by the conduct of the school, including students, parents, visitors and contractors.

Under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* all schools are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards. Compliance with Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse (Ministerial Order 870) is part of the prescribed minimum standards for school registration.

School councils have certain responsibilities in relation to the Child Safe Standards. More information about these responsibilities can be found on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library under Child Safe Standards, available at www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy.

School council membership

Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils makes provision for each school council structure and membership:

- **Parent members**
Parents of students at the school must comprise more than one third of the school council's total membership, according to Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils. 'Parent' includes a guardian or person responsible for the maintenance or with custody of a student of the school. Department employees, except for the principal, (who is a member of the school employee member category), are eligible for membership in this category as long as they have children attending the school and the Department employees do not work at the school of that school council.
- **Community members**
At some schools the council's membership schedule may include members in this category. If a council includes community members, the council decides who to approach and co-opt into this position. Community members are co-opted to bring additional skills and perspectives to council decision making. Community members hold the same rights, responsibilities and terms of office as elected members. Parents are eligible to be co-opted to a community member position, but Department employees are not. Students may also be co-opted to a community member position.
- **Student members**
Schools that provide secondary level education must have two student members on council unless an exemption has been granted. 'Student' is a student who is enrolled at and attends the school and is in Year 7 or above. To be eligible for election, a student must be a member of the student body of the school.
- **Nominee members**
A very small number of school councils have a nominee member category. Nominee members are appointed by organisations authorised by the Minister for Education. Nominee members generally have the same rights, responsibilities and terms of office as elected members unless otherwise provided in Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils. Principals review the terms of appointment of the nominees at the start of each school year.
- **School employee members**
To be eligible for election to this category, a person must be a member of the school employee electorate of the school. The principal is automatically included in this membership category and has full voting rights. Other school staff (teaching and non-teaching) are elected to this category. School employee members are considered Department employees. The number of school employee members must not be more than one third of the school council's total membership, according to Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils.

Code of conduct for school councillors

School councils in Victoria are public entities for the purposes of the *Public Administration Act 2004*. School councillors are directors of public entities and must abide by the Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities (Code of Conduct) issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission.

The Code of Conduct sets the standard of behaviour 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 in mind
- **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 do not 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
- **act consistently with legislative and policy requirements when making decisions**
- **notify the school council if they become a candidate for an election** in any state, local or federal election and not use the council's resources in connection with their candidature
- **demonstrate leadership and stewardship** – set a good example, encourage a culture of accountability and child safety, manage risks effectively and responsibly to keep the school strong and sustainable.

Public Sector Values

School councillors must also abide by and demonstrate the Victorian Public Sector Values set out in the Code of Conduct. These Values are Responsiveness, Integrity, Impartiality, Accountability, Respect, Leadership and Human Rights.

The Values underpin the behaviours that the government and community expect of all directors of public entities, including school council members.

A failure to uphold the Values can result in reputational damage for the school council, school and Government, and can undermine confidence in the community and in democratic practices.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct are taken very seriously.

Why do we need Values?

Values describe a commonly understood set of expected behaviours.

The Values set out the way that school councillors, as directors of public entities, should think and act. These behaviours increase trust and confidence in our work. The public expect employees and school council members to act in accordance with the Values. Doing so is central to building and sustaining trust in the important work we do.

When school council members act in accordance with the Code of Conduct and the Values, it strengthens the school's capacity to operate effectively and achieve its objectives.

The Values have been adopted by the Department as the DET Values and complement each school's values and teachers' professional standards, such as the Codes of Conduct and Ethics issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

For all school staff and school council members, behaving with integrity and respect in everyday decisions and actions goes to the heart of the community's trust in the school and the public education system.

Working together

School councillors must abide by the Code of Conduct and work together in the best interests of the school, including:

- assisting in the efficient governance of the school
- ensuring that the council's decisions affecting students are made having regard to the best interests of the students as a primary consideration
- enhancing the educational opportunities of students at the school
- ensuring the school council adheres to all legal and Department requirements.

Conflict may occur when school councillors do not understand the difference between the role of the principal as educational leader of the school as well as executive officer of council, and the governance role of school council members.

See '**Distinctions in roles and responsibilities**' in this module for examples of school activities that school councils may be involved in.

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library provides information and advice on the Code of Conduct and managing conflict on council should it arise. In an environment where mutual trust and respect prevail, conflict can be a positive force. It can encourage people to find creative solutions, clarify an issue, increase the involvement of members, encourage growth, and strengthen relationships. However, conflict or misconduct can divert energy from the group, compromise morale and create disharmony.

Confidentiality

School councillors bring diverse views to the council and work together to develop a shared vision for the improvement of student outcomes.

Confidentiality and the proper use of information is an important component of the code of conduct for school councillors.

School councillors are expected to use the information they gain in the course of their council responsibilities for its intended purpose only. Members use the information at council meetings to guide their discussions and decision-making. Councillors cannot use the information, including privileged information or sensitive information, to obtain an advantage for themselves or another person or to cause concern or loss of the community's trust.

Council members must feel assured their discussions and views are treated confidentially by other members. All councillors must respect privacy and use their discretion and good judgement when dealing with school council information. For example, council members should not discuss who said what or the different views of councillors, outside of the council meeting. Private information from council meetings that could identify a staff member, student or their family must not be discussed, such as information that could identify applicants in a principal selection process. The school council president and principal can provide guidance on any matter and the need for confidentiality, if required.



Resources and links

Information, related policies and advice can be located in the Department's Policy and Advisory Library for schools www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal including:

School Council – Powers and Functions

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-powers-and-functions/policy

School Council – Composition and Office Bearers

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-composition-and-office-bearers/policy

School Council – Conduct and Conflict of Interest

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-conduct/policy

Values – Department and VPS Values for School Employees

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/values-department-vps-school-employees/overview

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/gifts-benefits-and-hospitality/policy

Procurement – Schools

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/procurement-in-schools/policy

Child Safe Standards

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy

PROTECT

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx

Protect – online learning for schools – Login required

elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/schools

Outside School Hours Care –

Decision Making Regarding the Provision of OSHC

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy

Other relevant resources:

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and the National Quality Framework website

acecqa.gov.au

National Quality Framework

www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/nqf.aspx

Quality and Assessment Regulations Division (QARD) on the Early childhood regulation and quality assessment page on the Department's website

www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/default.aspx

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 on the Department's website

www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006

Victorian Public Sector Commission Code of conduct for directors of Victorian public entities page

vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/code-of-conduct-for-directors-of-public-entities

1.2

What school councils do

Why is this topic important?

Under the Act, a school council has a particular function in establishing the school's broad direction and vision. Councillors need to understand what their role is, the powers, functions and duties of the school council and how they are required to work with the principal and the school community.

On completing this unit, councillors should understand:

- how the legislative functions of school councils translate into governance roles and responsibilities including those that require decisions of council
- the distinctions in roles and responsibilities of school council and those of the school principal
- how partnerships can assist the school council in performing its functions, powers and roles.

Objectives of a school council

The objectives of a school council are specified in the Act and include:

- to assist in the efficient governance of the school
- to ensure that decisions affecting students of the school are made having regard, as a primary consideration, to the best interest of the students
- to enhance the educational opportunities of students at the school
- to ensure the school and the council complies with any requirements of the Act, the Regulations, a Ministerial Order or a direction, guideline of policy issued under the Act.

Functions of a school council

The functions and powers of a school council are specified in the Act and include:

- establishing the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community¹
- participating in the development, monitoring and endorsement of the School Strategic Plan (SSP) and Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)
- approving the annual budget and monitoring expenditure²
- raising funds for school-related purposes³
- having general oversight over the school's grounds and buildings⁴
- providing the cleaning and sanitary services that are necessary for the school⁵
- ensuring that all money coming into the council is used for proper purposes relating to the school⁶
- the provision of meals and refreshments for the staff and students of the school and charging for those meals or refreshments⁷
- entering into contracts, such as for cleaning in regional schools or construction work⁸
- reporting annually to the school community and to the Department⁹
- creating interest in the school in the wider community¹⁰
- taking into account the views of the school community¹¹
- developing, reviewing or updating school policies that fall within a school council's responsibilities
- regulating and facilitating the after-hours use of the school premises and grounds, for example: managing the hire, licence and shared use of school facilities¹²
- if desired, the school council of a school that provides primary education and in relation to which the council is constituted may provide preschool programs at the school or other premises controlled by the Minister.¹³

1. *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* s 2.3.5(a). 2. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(g). 3. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(c). 4. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(e). 5. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(f). 6. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(g). 7. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(h). 8. *Ibid* s 2.3.6(1)(a). 9. *Ibid* s 2.3.27 (1) and (2). 10. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(j). 11. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(i). 12. *Ibid* s 2.3.5(d). 13. *Ibid* s 2.3.20.1(a).

A school council should exercise its powers and perform its functions for the purpose of meeting its objectives. However, a school council is not responsible for a school's compliance with obligations that fall outside the scope of their functions and powers.

School council is generally also involved in the school principal selection process. When principal selection occurs, a panel is formed to review applications, interview shortlisted applicants and recommend one or more applicants to the Secretary of the Department to employ. The selection panel includes councillors, and Department staff. Principal selection panel members are provided with principal selection panel training.

The school council president, on request from the Regional Director, provides input to principal contract renewal discussions. The president advises the school council of that input at the next school council meeting.

What a school council is not authorised to do

A school council is not authorised to:

- acquire land or lease land or premises
- employ teachers for longer than 12 months or with no fixed date for the termination of that employment.

Unless authorised by or under the Act, Regulations or a Ministerial Order, a school council is not able to:

- hire or licence school facilities for a purpose that is not educational, recreational, sporting or cultural or involves the construction and long-term shared use of buildings and facilities
- purchase a motor vehicle, boat or plane for the school
- enter into hire purchase agreements for the school
- obtain credit facilities or loans on behalf of the school
- form or become a member of a corporation
- provide for any matter or thing outside of Victoria unless it is related to an excursion by school students or the professional development of school staff.

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:

- the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a councillor, or
- the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a councillor.

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



Distinctions in roles and responsibilities

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

The school council has a limited governance and oversight role, whereas the principal manages the day-to-day activities of the school and is responsible for ensuring the delivery of a comprehensive education to every student with the knowledge, capabilities and attributes for their future role in society. The principal also holds a duty of care for, and is responsible for the care, safety and welfare of the students at the school.

The following table shows a range of school activities that school councils may be involved in:

Area of activity	The principal ...	The school council ...
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leads the organisation, management and administration of the school • allocates teaching or other duties to teaching staff • is responsible for the general care, safety and welfare of students • determines the overarching education decisions for students, such as curriculum and staffing arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes the broad direction and vision of school • ensures all money is expended for proper purposes relating to the school • informs itself of the views of the school community
Strategic direction of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leads development of curriculum – teaching and learning programs • determines teacher, subject and time allocations; timetable; class sizes; and structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develops the broad direction and vision for the school, using guidelines provided by the Department
Student dress code policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implements the student dress code developed by school council in consultation with the wider school community • considers and, where appropriate, grants exemptions to dress code guidelines for individual students • enforces the student dress code 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develops student dress code policy in close consultation with the wider school community • consults with the school community before adopting changes to this policy

Area of activity	The principal ...	The school council ...
Camps and excursions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for approving all excursions and relevant operational requirements, including camps, interstate and international • Where a camp or excursion involves more than one school, all relevant principals are responsible for approving all excursions involving another school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for approving the financial component of an excursion or camp. That is, in relation to the school's budget and the parent payments policy or contracts engaging third party providers
Buildings and grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for maintenance of school buildings and grounds • monitors implementation of contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exercises a general oversight of school buildings and grounds to ensure they are kept in good condition and order • oversees school cleaning, and in regional schools only, enters into contracts for school cleaning • enters into contracts for building and grounds improvements • makes decisions about the hiring and shared use of school facilities in accordance with Department policy requirements
School review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeps the whole school community and council informed about the school review • leads the Pre-review Self-evaluation in consultation with the whole school community • is a member of the core School Review Panel • presents the findings of the review report to the school staff and school council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participates in the Pre-review Self-evaluation • value-adds to the review as defined in the terms of reference e.g. participation in focus groups etc. • is presented with the findings of the report and accepts the report <p>The school council president:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a member of the core School Review Panel
Strategic and Annual Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engages the staff and school community in development of the School Strategic Plan following the school review • engages the staff and school community in the development of the Annual Implementation Plan • engages the staff and school community in the monitoring of progress against annual targets • endorses the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan in the Strategic Planning Online Tool (SPOT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributes to the finalisation of the School Strategic Plan following the school review • contributes to the development of the Annual Implementation Plan • president endorses the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan in SPOT • ensures regular monitoring of the Annual Implementation Plan, including any risks to achieving goals and milestones

Area of activity	The principal ...	The school council ...
Outside school hours care or kindergarten service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engages the school community in the decision-making process to establish or change operating models or service provider informs the school community and school council about the service on a regular basis may be nominated by school council as the person with management or control for a school council managed operating model has knowledge of the National Law and National Regulations and the Child Safe Standards as they apply to education and care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decides whether to establish a school council operated service or engage a third-party service provider is the legal entity under the National Law of a school council managed operating model, and therefore has the role as approved provider. As approved provider, the council nominates people with management or control, noting this does not take away from the approved provider's legal responsibilities in a third-party provider operating model, selects, engages and contract-manages the preferred provider, and endorses the licence agreement negotiated with a third party receives regular program reports from the OSHC or kindergarten provider regularly monitors the provider's compliance with the requirements of the National Law should be consulted on the development of the service's Quality Improvement Plan and be provided with a copy of the service's Assessment and Rating report
Child Safe Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approves strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school approves the Child Safety Policy ensures the school follows the Recruitment in Schools Guide to ensure the school's hiring practices are child safe approves the Child Safety Code of Conduct approves the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) policy and procedures approves the school's child safety risk management strategies ensures appropriate guidance and training about child safety is provided to school staff at least annually approves strategies to deliver appropriate education about standards of behaviour for students attending the school, healthy and respectful relationships, resilience, and child abuse awareness and prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where relevant, implements strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety approves the Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council members and employees, unless delegated to the principal for school council employees, ensures that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe, unless delegated to the principal undertakes appropriate guidance and training about the council's obligations and responsibilities towards child safety, at least annually to the extent the school council is responsible, attests the school is compliant with the Child Safe Standards where necessary reviews existing contracts in consultation with the principal and ensures all contracts address the requirements of the Child Safe Standards can locate further information about council roles and responsibilities, on the Department's website, at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx



Delegations

The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 allow school councils to delegate their powers and duties. A school council must generally obtain approval from the Minister for Education to delegate a power or duty to a person or body other than the principal.

A school council cannot delegate any of its functions or powers in relation to the approval of the school budget or Annual Report.

The delegation must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting of school council and a register of delegations must be kept by the school council. The instrument setting out the delegations, and the terms and conditions of the delegations, must be signed by the president of the school council, or a council member appointed for this purpose, and delivered to the delegates. Further information on delegating a school council power or function, including a fact sheet and template instrument of delegation, is available on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library under School council - Powers and Functions.

A person or body to whom a delegation has been made must provide a written report about any activities performed as a delegate at each ordinary meeting of the school council.

Strategic planning

One of the key functions of school councils is to contribute to the establishment of the broad vision and direction for the school.

The school council president must also endorse or attest to a number of school planning and implementation documents in the Strategic Planning Online Tool (SPOT) on behalf of the council. Accessing the SPOT system requires the use of a Department Education Mail account which should be regularly checked by the president to ensure they are up to date with any Department requirements.

Strategic planning is the process for reflecting on past performance, establishing future directions and deciding what will build success. Further information on school council's role in strategic planning is provided in the ISG training module: Strategic Planning.

In other words, it involves the school community considering the following questions:

- where have we been?
- where do we want to go?
- how will we get there?
- how will we know if we have been successful?

The Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) Improvement Cycle outlines a clear cycle for developing the School Strategic Plan and planning for improving student outcomes.

The cycle includes:

- **Evaluate and diagnose** – monitoring and reviewing the school's performance against its current School Strategic Plan through:
 - annual self-evaluation
 - Pre-review Self-evaluation (every four years)
 - conducting a school review every four years, to examine the school's performance over the previous strategic plan period and to plan for improvement, including undertaking a process by which the school's compliance with registration requirements is checked, every four years.
 - publishing an Annual Report for the school community, including parents/guardians, students and other interested people about the school's successes and challenges in implementing the strategic plan and improving student outcomes.
- **Prioritise and set goals** – developing a four-year School Strategic Plan that outlines goals, targets and key improvement strategies and expected outcomes in a school-based plan that reflects local needs, based on data, including any key risks to achievement and aligned to FISO, including the FISO four statewide priorities and six high-impact Improvement Initiatives.
- **Develop and plan** – developing Annual Implementation Plans that describe how the key improvement strategies and other specific projects in the School Strategic Plan will be implemented, monitored and evaluated each year. This links to performance and development plans for the principal and teachers.
- **Implement and monitor** – collaboratively monitoring and reviewing the impact of the school's improvement strategies and initiatives on student learning, including key risks to achievement. The potential risks associated with the delivery of the Annual Implementation Plan and the School Strategic Plan should be reviewed, discussed and approved by the school council.

The following table provides an overview of how the principal and staff, school council and school community would typically be involved in the strategic planning process. Senior Education Improvement Leaders, who work within each of the regions, also play an important role in the strategic planning process. These roles and responsibilities are examined in detail in the Strategic Planning module.

The principal ...	The school council ...	The Senior Education Improvement Leader ...
Evaluate and diagnose		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plans and manages the Pre-review Self-evaluation, in consultation with the school improvement team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviews the plan and timeline for the Pre-review Self-evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the school in undertaking a Pre-review Self-evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organises consultations, gathers and analyses data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participates in working groups and involves the community in consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> works with the principal to access and interpret data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oversees the drafting of the Pre-review Self-evaluation report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> endorses the final Pre-review Self-evaluation report in SPOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides feedback and endorses the Pre-review Self-evaluation report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plans for the school review and provides performance data to the School Review Panel as a member of the core School Review Panel, analyses the Pre-review Self-evaluation report and other school data in preparation for the review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> president, as a member of the core School Review Panel, analyses the Pre-review Self-evaluation report and other school data in preparation for the review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as a member of the core School Review Panel, analyses the Pre-review Self-evaluation report and other school data in preparation for the review
Prioritise and set goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> finalises the School Strategic Plan using the directions provided in the school review report in SPOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the development of a long-term view of the school's directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the school council to prepare the draft School Strategic Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organises consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involves the community in consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviews the draft School Strategic Plan and provides advice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> endorses the School Strategic Plan and the president endorses the plan in SPOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtains endorsement for the School Strategic Plan from the Regional Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates and implements the School Strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates and monitors the School Strategic Plan 	

The principal ...	The school council ...	The Senior Education Improvement Leader ...
Implement and monitor		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keeps the school community informed about progress in implementing the School Strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitors progress in implementing the School Strategic Plan, including key risks to achievement 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drafts and signs the Annual Report in SPOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> endorses the Annual Report to the school community president endorses the Annual Report in SPOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides quality assurance for the Annual Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organises a public meeting to present the Annual Report to the school community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reports to the school community on the school's performance together with the principal and president 	

School council annual self-assessment

School councils operate effectively when there is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and a clear and consistent process for decision-making. Self-assessments are an important process for reflecting on school council effectiveness.

The *Public Administration Act 2004* (PAA) provides guidance and accountability standards for all Victorian Government school councils as public entities. It is a requirement under the PAA that all school councils undertake an annual self-assessment.

A school council self-assessment tool has been designed by the Department to assist school councils in evaluating their effectiveness as a group and identifying areas for improvement.

Councillors should use this tool to reflect on their roles and the effectiveness of the school council as a whole. The council can then discuss the results in small groups or as a whole team and develop an improvement plan.

Most school councils will identify some areas for improvement. For example, they may agree that some council operational practices could be refined or improved.

School council may wish to build particular knowledge and capabilities by undertaking the Department's Improving School Governance (ISG) training. The training is available via a virtual facilitator-led format, or face-to-face delivery at the school, or online as interactive, self-paced, activity-based modules. The training is available free of charge to Victorian Government school councils.

The Department's self-assessment tool can be located on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library for schools under School Councils – Training and Good Governance available at www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-training/policy.

Finance

It is a legal requirement that school councils ensure that funds coming into the school council are being properly used and authorised.

To this end, school councils are responsible for overseeing a functioning and effective system of internal controls in accordance with the Finance Manual for Victorian Government Schools. Further information on school council's role in financial management is also provided in the ISG Finance module.

Internal controls are the procedures that ensure:

- all financial activity within the school is sound, accurate and legal
- the school's assets are safe
- school council can rely on the accuracy of the financial information it receives.

School council also helps develop the school's program (non-staff) budget that shows how the school will allocate its resources to implement the key improvement strategies in the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan. Council then monitors the school's financial performance against the budget in conjunction with the principal.

Finally, council is responsible for how the school raises funds, over and above the funding provided by the government. It must manage any financial and reputational risks that could arise and ensure that all legal and policy requirements are met.

It is recommended all school councils have a treasurer, although this is not mandatory. Most school councils have a finance subcommittee which handles many of the council's routine financial responsibilities. The treasurer is usually the convener of the finance subcommittee, is elected from council members, and is preferably a non-Department employee. The Business Manager/bursar must not hold this position. It is recommended the office bearer position of treasurer be elected at the first meeting of the school council after the declaration of the council election, in line with current practice.

The following table provides an overview of how the principal and staff, school council and the school community would typically be involved in school financial management. These roles and responsibilities are examined in more detail in the ISG Finance module.

The principal ...	The school council ...
Internal controls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides financial reports to council • puts in place a system of internal controls consistent with Department policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considers financial reports • ensures the school has and uses a system of internal controls consistent with Department policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducts school financial business in line with the system of internal controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adheres to internal controls such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appointing a school councillor, normally the school council president or another member who has been delegated the authority by the school council, to approve payments and sign cheques; this councillor cannot be the Business Manager - approving trading operations - ensuring issues raised by auditors are addressed - identifying and managing conflicts of interest - monitoring and overseeing offers and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality within the school and at least annually, reviewing the School Register for compliance with policy
Budgeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develops the budget timeline • develops program budgets with staff, and salary and revenue budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approves the budget timeline • reviews budget submissions and program priority list. This can be undertaken by the finance subcommittee if school council has one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluates program outcomes, prepares and prioritises budget submissions • communicates the budget to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews and approves the budget
Financial Reports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepares financial reports • explains financial reports to the finance subcommittee and school council, and recommends action as appropriate • implements the council's decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitors revenue and expenditure against the budget • takes action to address issues arising from the financial reports
Fundraising	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assists with the review of fundraising proposals • advises council about available cash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approves fundraising activities • reviews approved fundraising profit and loss
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develops a parent payments policy • implements policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributes to and approves the parent payments policy

Investment register

From February 2019, schools were no longer permitted to establish new or retain existing term deposits or At Call accounts.

Existing At Call accounts and term deposits must be closed immediately and all funds must be rolled into the Centralised Banking System (CBS) linked High Yield Investment A (HYIA) account upon maturity.

Contracts and contract management

A school council can purchase goods, equipment and materials for carrying out its functions, subject to the Act. School councils are strongly encouraged to use the PAL policy, Contractors, Insurance and Contract Agreements to locate template Agreements (www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/contractors-insurance-contract-arrangements/policy) created by the Department for the purchase of goods and services. If a supplier insists on using their own Agreement or you would like to amend a template Agreement, it is recommended the principal seek advice from the Legal Division.

School councils must:

- provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health for all employees, independent contractors and contractor's employees
- ensure that contractors are competent and able to control their own systems of work
- retain a general supervisory power over any work undertaken by a contractor
- define the contractor's respective areas of responsibility, particularly where there is more than one contractor involved
- examine carefully the contractual arrangements
- ensure that selection, supervision and management practices for school council employees and contractors are child safe
- ensure that the activities undertaken do not put staff, students or the contractors at risk.

School councils should use the standard contracts or related documents available from the Legal Division which include:

- maintenance or cleaning services
- school canteen licence
- hiring school premises by third parties
- school uniform items
- Outside School Hours Care service approval
- Expression of Interest template for third party OSHC program
- Kindergarten service approval.

School councils must ensure that the school complies with the Department's Procurement Policy and the Finance Manual for Victorian Government Schools, found on the Policy and Advisory Library.

Further information on school council's role in financial management is provided in the ISG Finance module.

Sponsorship and school councils

Sponsorship can provide a mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship between organisations, local businesses and Victorian Government schools.

Well-managed sponsorship arrangements can provide an effective way of increasing awareness of school initiatives, building stakeholder relationships, and help communicate with specific audiences within the community.

The role of school councils regarding sponsorship is two-fold. School council members should be aware of, and refer to, the Department's sponsorship policy, and have a broad understanding of the processes involved when seeking, planning, implementing and evaluating a sponsorship proposal.

School principals, councils and staff must:

- undertake sponsorships in an ethical and fair manner and disclose any conflict of interests
- only engage in sponsorship activities that meet one or more of the following sponsorship principles:
 - promote and improve educational outcomes
 - support school goals and objectives
 - increase effectiveness of the Department's strategic programs
 - engage or build relationships with stakeholders.
- assess proposed sponsorships against the policy and guidelines
- assess the value and benefits of the sponsorship against project or program criteria
- draft sponsorship agreements on receipt of relevant approvals
- ensure all sponsorship agreements have end dates
- register and record all sponsorship details
- monitor and evaluate the sponsorship arrangement.

In particular, school councils need to be aware of the types of external sponsors that are and are not permitted, and the types of activities that can be sponsored.

Appropriate activity

The Department and schools must not engage in sponsorship that is inappropriate, either through association or activity, and the following activities/organisations should not be considered for sponsorship:

- activities aimed at delivering or replacing core Departmental, school or agency services
- activities or sponsorship partners whose values, products, purposes or objectives are inconsistent with the Department's policies, values, priorities or objectives
- political parties, tobacco companies, gaming venues, companies involved in the sale or promotion of alcohol, or involved in the sale/promotion of firearms
- companies that encourage unhealthy food choices by young people
- religious organisations or religious activities
- unregistered charities and not-for-profit organisations, including those not registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- organisations or companies that are financially unsound or unstable
- agencies with inspectorial or regulatory powers over the Department.

Schools should seek advice from Schools Procurement in the first instance by email at: schools_procurement@education.vic.gov.au

School councils also need to be aware of **approval thresholds**. School councils are responsible for approving incoming and outgoing sponsorships \$25,000 and under. Sponsorship activities above \$25,000 must be approved by the school council and the relevant Regional Director. Once approved by the Regional Director, the school must then inform the Communications Division by email at: sponsorship@education.vic.gov.au

Detailed guidance on the process, required approval levels, registers, agreements and other recording requirements is contained within the Schools Sponsorship Procedure document, which must be read and followed in conjunction with the Department's Sponsorship Policy and Guidelines. Schools must comply with this policy. Additional resources relating to sponsorships and sponsorships above \$25,000 are also included in the policy. The policy is located on the Department's website.

For further information on the approval process please contact the Strategic Communications Branch, Communications Division, by email at: sponsorship@education.vic.gov.au

The Victorian Schools Building Authority (VSBA) School Asset Management Roles and Responsibilities Framework

The School Asset Management Roles and Responsibilities Framework (the framework) describes the school facilities management roles and responsibilities for school councils, principals and corporate (Department) staff. The Framework has been designed to help school councils understand their unique asset management role and responsibilities and explain how these responsibilities work in conjunction with those of principals and the Department. In particular, the Framework provides practical information about the school council's legislative function to 'exercise general oversight of school buildings and grounds' and how this function applies to a variety of key asset management topics. Councillors can work with the president and principal to inform themselves of their role and responsibilities.

The following table provides an overview of what the principal and leadership team, and the school council are responsible for in terms of asset management.

The principal ...	The school council ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is the asset manager for their school and responsible for the planning of and delivery of safe and sustainable learning environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for the supply of goods, services, facilities, materials, equipment and other things or matters that are required for the conduct of the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for overseeing, planning and managing the maintenance of school facilities, and ensuring their school site is safe and secure for all staff, students and visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for general oversight of the school buildings and grounds and ensuring that they are kept in good order and condition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for ensuring compliance with Occupational Health and Safety regulations and policies and facilitating the regular inspection, testing and maintenance of Essential Safety Measures (ESM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must ensure that the school (as a workplace) is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health. This duty extends to the oversight of ESM.

Councillors can work with the president and principal to inform themselves of their role and responsibilities.

For further information, contact the **Victorian School Building Authority** on **1800 896 950** or on the **Victorian School Building Authority's email** at vsba@education.vic.gov.au

Policy development and review

The school council can play a valuable role in developing selected school policies. Council can also advise the school principal and leadership team on the views of the school community where appropriate.

School principals are responsible for operational school policies, procedures and decisions. However, there are a small number of policies that must be developed and approved by the school council because of legal requirements or Department policy, for example uniform policies and finance policies.

For other local school policies, the principal may choose to seek school council approval of a policy (even where there is no legal or other requirement to do so), may consult with the school council during the policy development phase or may present policies to the school council for noting.

The ISG Policy and Review module provides further information on the school council's role in policy development, review and approval. Information and template school policies are also available on the Department's School Policy Templates Portal which can be accessed by staff and school council presidents with an education email address.

The following table provides an overview of what the principal and leadership team, and the school council are responsible for in terms of policy development.

The principal ...	The school council ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advises council about the need for the school policy to meet government policy and guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determines the need for policy on local issues within its powers and functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributes to policy development as a member of council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develops selected policies, including consulting with the school community if required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implements policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews existing policies on a cyclical basis • monitors policy effectiveness where appropriate

Community Engagement

The functions and powers of a school council are specified in the Act and include the important component of community engagement within school council's role.

Engagement with the community supports the council in establishing the broad direction and vision of the school, reflecting the community and Department's expectations.

Consultation provides members of the school community with an opportunity to provide input into decision-making and allows school council to recognise and take into account the views of the community. Consultation can inform council, and provide clarity, however it does not mean the community makes the decision. School council seeks opinions, advice and views on matters pertaining to the school and community and then makes its decision within the scope of its powers and functions.

Involving the school community in school matters, activities and programs generates interest, involvement and knowledge of the school. It enhances positive relationships and confidence in the school and the school council.

School council reports annually to the school community and to the Department. The public reporting meeting is an opportunity to promote the school's achievements, annual priorities and present an overview of the school to the local community of the school.

Community engagement can also be encouraged through involvement in school council subcommittees or working parties. Working on a subcommittee can provide an introduction into the work of council and that of the school. School community ideas and views can be incorporated into recommendations that are taken by the subcommittee to council.

School council meetings are usually open to the school community and are conducted according to standard meeting requirements. The council standing orders will describe the process for visitors to request their attendance at council meetings and clarify their level of involvement.

Partnerships with council members and with the school community

In an effective school council, processes are characterised by a mutual sharing of information, knowledge and ideas.

There is a focus on dialogue in which all school council members are able to exchange information, share experiences, honestly express perspectives, pose questions, clarify viewpoints, explore relevant research and develop a shared vision and way forward.

Effective school councils are conscious of the need for positive working relationships and partnerships within both the council itself, and the school community.

The main partnerships that a school council will have are described below and will potentially include partnerships with businesses, industry, community organisations, early childhood education and care services, such as OSHC and kindergartens, universities, technical and further education institutions, such as TAFEs and other schools.

The principal

The principal holds two distinct roles within the school.

Firstly, the principal, as an employee of the Secretary to the Department, is responsible for the organisation, management and administration of the school and implementing Department policies.

In practice, the principal is the leader of the school and is the Department representative in the school.

The principal and school council must have a close working relationship to bring together the school's strategic and operational activities.

Secondly, the principal is the school council's executive officer and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the school council, ensuring school councils have adequate and appropriate advice on educational and other matters, and providing support and resources for the conduct of school council meetings.



Staff

Staff are represented on school councils, in the school employee category. It is important that staff members work closely with all council members, as council recommendations and decisions can directly affect the work of staff through the school council's strategic planning work, setting the school's long-term direction, policy development and/or budgeting, and allocating resources for their programs.

Students

School councillors are required by legislation to ensure that decisions affecting students of the school are made in the best interest of the students.

Students are represented on school councils of schools that provide secondary school level education. Student members will be involved in discussions and decisions on matters relating to the school and have the same voting rights as other council members.

School council might also have links with the student representative body. At times a school council will consult with all students, particularly in relation to policy development on topics which have an impact on students.

The school community

The school community includes staff, students, parents and families. The broader community may comprise businesses, industry, services clubs, sports clubs, early childhood services and other interested individuals and organisations. Parent and community representatives on school council contribute community perspectives to all deliberations. They also build links with and explain the school's values and directions to the community.

Community members are represented on council if the Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils includes members in this category (community members are optional). Department employees are not able to be community members.

The Department

All Victorian government school councils must comply with relevant legislation, Ministerial Orders and directions as well as guidelines and Department policies, where required to do so by the Minister.

High risk areas for conflicts of interest

Any interaction between the school council and school community raises the potential for conflicts of interest.

Some examples of conflict of interest risks may arise when a school council undertakes the following activities or in the following areas:

- recruitment and selection activities
- procurement activities
- funding allocation activities
- previous associations
- gifts, benefits and hospitality.

Conflicts of interest in recruitment might include:

- family relationships or friendships with an applicant
- close working relationship with an applicant
- a hostile relationship with any applicant.

If you are involved in any type of recruitment or selection process, you must consider whether you have an actual potential or perceived conflict of interest. If so, or if you are unsure, you must declare the conflict of interest to the school council at the earliest possible stage.

Conflict of interest risks can affect any stage of procurement. Regardless of the monetary value, these risks must be proactively managed throughout the life of a procurement project.

Conflicts of interest in procurement or funding allocations might include:

- gifts, benefits or hospitality being offered to employees involved in the procurement process
- family relationships or friendships with a supplier
- close working relationships as a result of regular business with a supplier.

Other interests and associations that may result in actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest are:

- external consulting
- other (external) employment
- private tutoring
- out-of-hours sporting or community activities
- using contractors for private works
- personal relationships with employees
- group affiliations
- other public duties; for example, member of local council or political party
- family and other relationships.

For more information on conflicts of interest and how to appropriately manage conflicts, see the Legal Requirements section of this manual.

Integrity Liaison Officers are located in each regional office and provide advice to principals and school council presidents on the management of conflicts of interest.

Resources and links

Further information, related policies and advice can be located on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library for schools at www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal including:

School Council –

Powers and Functions

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-powers-and-functions/policy

School Council –

Training and Good Governance

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-training/policy

School Council – Conduct and Conflict of Interest

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-conduct/policy

School Council –

Liability and Legal Proceedings

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-liability/policy

School Strategic Plan

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-strategic-plan/policy

Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/annual-implementation-plan/policy

Sponsorship

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/sponsorship/policy

Asset Management

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/asset-management-planning/policy

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/gifts-benefits-and-hospitality/policy

Philanthropic Partnerships

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/philanthropic-partnerships/policy

Finance Manual – Financial Management for Schools

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy

Child Safe Standards

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy

Outside School Hours Care – Decision Making Regarding the Provision of OSHC

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy

Procurement – Schools

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/procurement-in-schools/policy

Principal Selection

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/principal-selection/overview

Strategic Planning Online Tool – log-in required

apps.edustar.vic.edu.au/spot

School Policy Templates Portal

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-policy-templates-portal

Other relevant resources:

Code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees on the Victorian Public Sector Commission Code of conduct for directors of Victorian public entities page

vpssc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/code-of-conduct-for-directors-of-public-entities

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services

An OSHC training program has been designed to assist school councillors understand their roles and responsibilities in establishing and managing an OSHC service in their school.

The training program consists of an 8-minute introduction to OSHC video, and a 30-40 minute online training module.

The OSHC video and online module is available from the Improving School Governance Training portal, accessible from the Department's school council web page.

The video will also be available from the Department's OSHC website.

Public Administration Act 2004 (PAA) on the Legislative Framework: the Public Administration Act 2004 page, on the Victorian Public Sector Commission website

vpssc.vic.gov.au/about-vpssc/legislative-framework-the-public-administration-act-2004

Victorian Schools Building Authority (VSBA) website

schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/Pages/home.aspx

1.3

Council operations

Why is this topic important?

Clarity in the following two areas assists school councils to operate effectively and efficiently:

- the roles and responsibilities of members, particularly office bearers such as the principal and the president
- the way in which the school council establishes a set of rules, such as Standing Orders, to ensure that its meetings run smoothly and fulfil its governance functions.

On completing this unit, school councillors should understand:

- the roles and responsibilities of the school principal and school council president
- the roles and responsibilities of school council subcommittees
- the need for Standing Orders.

Roles and responsibilities of the principal and school council president

To provide clarity about the role of the school principal and that of the school council president, the table below provides a brief outline of the differences between their respective roles and responsibilities.

The principal ...	The school council president ...
<p>As executive officer of the school council, the principal is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing school council with timely advice about educational and other matters related to school council functions and powers • preparing the school council's agenda in consultation with the school council president • reporting regularly to the school council about the school's performance against its School Strategic Plan • making sure that council decisions are implemented • providing adequate support and resources for the conduct of school council meetings • communicating with the school council president about school council business • confirming in the school's Annual Report that the school has met the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) registration requirements • ensuring that new council members are inducted • creating an Education Mail account for the school council president and encouraging the president to check their account regularly • recording the president's details on CASES21 • keeping the community informed about council's decisions. 	<p>The role of the school council president is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effectively chair school council meetings, ensuring that everyone has a say in meetings and that decisions are properly understood and well-recorded • be a signatory to contracts, the School Strategic Plan and financial accounts • together with the school council, endorse the school Pre-review Self-evaluation, terms of reference for the school review, School Strategic Plan, Annual Implementation Plan and Annual Report and communicate this information to the school community • ensure school council stays focused on improving student outcomes • with the principal, be school council's spokesperson and official representative on public occasions • with the principal, confirm in the school's Annual Report that the school has met VRQA registration requirements • when votes are tied, have a second or casting vote • access email communications each week from the Department through the president's Education Mail account and communicate these to school council members where relevant.

Roles and responsibilities of school council subcommittees

Subcommittees assist school council in the work that needs to be done and report regularly at school council meetings. These committees provide advice and make recommendations to school council, which has the final responsibility for making decisions.

The decision-making responsibilities of the school council should not be compromised by the work of any subcommittee.

The membership, purpose and terms of reference of subcommittees are determined by the school council. Members of a subcommittee may be school council and non-school council members. Subcommittees must have at least three members, including at least one school council member. Subcommittees should have procedures for developing agendas and ensuring minutes are taken at subcommittee meetings and reported to the school council.

All school councils are encouraged to have a finance subcommittee. Some examples of other areas in which subcommittees may assist school council perform their functions include buildings and grounds (facilities), local policy development and review, student leadership, information technology, community building or community relations, OSHC, and kindergarten or canteen if the school provides these services. Sample terms of reference and agenda templates for OSHC subcommittees, for both council and third-party managed services, are available on the Department website.

Further information about subcommittees is located on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library under School Council – Subcommittees available at www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-subcommittees/policy.

Standing Orders

A school council may develop and agree on Standing Orders to assist it to operate effectively and efficiently. It is good practice to establish Standing Orders and review them each year following completion of the election process.

Standing Orders typically comprise:

- an introduction – that outlines the purpose of the Standing Orders, their influence in promoting teamwork, avoiding conflict, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the council, the school councillors' code of conduct and the importance of following the Standing Orders
- reference to the Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils – which lists the membership structure by membership category and numbers
- an outline of office bearer positions and subcommittees
- a description of meeting procedures – how the school council will operate, including length of meetings, agendas, minutes, quorum requirements, meeting arrangements, open and closed meetings, effective decision-making, member absence from meetings, arrangements for extensions of meetings and meeting etiquette.

Legal requirements

The Regulations set out certain legal requirements in relation to conducting school council meetings. These requirements cannot be overridden by the Standing Orders determined by a school council. Set out below are the legal requirements and Department guidelines for **the operation of school council meetings**. School councils may approve additional guidelines to assist in effectively and efficiently conducting meetings.

Number of school council meetings each year

A school council must meet at least eight times a year and at least once every school term.

Who presides at a meeting

The school council president must preside at school council meetings. If the president is unable to preside, the meeting must be conducted in the following manner:

- if a vice-president has been appointed by the school council, the vice-president must preside at the meeting if available
- if the school council has not appointed a vice-president, or the vice-president is unable to preside, the school council must decide on a member of the council, other than an employee of the Department, to preside
- A Department employee, including the principal, is ineligible to be school council president or chair a school council meeting.

Quorum at a school council meeting

A school council meeting requires a quorum so that the proceedings of the meeting including any decisions made, are valid. Ordinarily, a quorum requires not less than one half of school council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting and the majority of members present must not be Department employees. Any parent members on school council who also work for the Department are counted as Department employees for the purpose of a quorum.

However, some school councils' constituting Orders, particularly those with nominee members, provide that a majority of the school council's total membership is not required to consist of persons who are not employees of the Department. In these cases, a quorum for a school council meeting is constituted if not less than one half of the members of the school council currently holding office are present.

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.

Decisions and voting

Decisions of school council must be made with quorum and must be supported by the majority of the members of the school council who are eligible to vote and are present at the school council meeting. Decisions are made by voting. School councillors need to ensure their votes on decisions affecting students, are made having regard, as a primary consideration, 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, must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The principal is a voting member of the school council. A council member's temporary absence for a vote on a particular matter, due to conflict of interest, does not affect the meeting quorum.

Tied votes

When a vote is tied, the school council presiding member, usually the school council president has a second or casting vote.

Conflict of interest

Conflicts of interest are an inevitable part of organisational life and many arise without any wrongdoing.

The public trusts school councillors to behave in an ethical and impartial manner. Conflicts of interest that are not effectively identified or managed put the school council and the school's reputation at risk and jeopardise the public's confidence in our school system.

A conflict of interest occurs when a school councillor's personal interests may influence, or may be seen to influence, their public duty. A personal interest may arise from a member's personal preference, relationship, business connections, bias, property, hobby, or a desire to help family and friends. Personal interests can also be pecuniary (financial) or non-pecuniary.

Actual conflicts of interest occur when a school councillor's private interest influences their current public duty.

Potential conflicts of interest occur where an actual conflict of interest may arise in the future.

Perceived conflicts of interest occur where a reasonable person might suspect that a school councillor is subject to an actual conflict of interest, whether or not one actually exists. Perceived conflicts may be just as damaging as 'actual' conflicts. Any reasonable perception that you, or your friends or family, are benefiting from the exercise of your public duty could result in the loss of public trust. You are obliged to identify these risks, and take action, in consultation with the principal and the president to mitigate them.

If a school council member or a member of their immediate family has an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest, either a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest, in a subject or matter under discussion at a school council meeting, the member must declare the conflict of interest. If the school council decides that the conflict of interest is material, the councillor must not be present during the relevant discussion unless invited to do so by the chair of the meeting and must not be present when a vote is taken on the matter. A school councillor's temporary absence for this purpose does not affect the meeting quorum. The declaration of interest must be included in the minutes of the meeting. If the conflict of interest involves a principal or Business Manager, it must be entered onto the Conflict of Interest Register on eduPay and managed appropriately.

Member absence

If a member is unable to attend a school council meeting, an apology should be submitted to the executive officer, the principal in advance of the meeting and it should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Minutes

Minutes are the official record of the proceedings at a school council meeting. Generally, a designated council member records a summary of what has been discussed, any decisions made and any actions to be taken before the next meeting. The minutes are written up under the agenda item headings and circulated by the principal to members before the next school council meeting where they are considered and confirmed.

The principal should keep the community informed about the council operations by publishing a report following a meeting in the school newsletter and/or on the school website.

A person does not have a right of access to the minutes of a school council meeting or other documents or records of a school council under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Public reporting meeting

A school council must call a public meeting, where any member of the public can attend, at least once each year and report the proceedings of the council since the date of the previous public meeting. The council must present the Annual Report to the public meeting and, if the school council accounts have been audited, present a copy of the audited accounts.

Open and closed meetings

School council meetings would normally be open to the school community and conducted according to standard meeting requirements. Visitors or observers can be present at the council meetings with the agreement of the principal and a decision of school council. Visitors may be invited to speak but must do so through the invitation of the person chairing the meeting, usually the school council president. They have no voting rights. There may be times when, for the purpose of confidentiality or other reasons, the council meeting, or part of the meeting, needs to be closed, such as considering a principal selection report.

Extraordinary meeting

An extraordinary meeting of a 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, or if absent, the principal, must call the extraordinary meeting of the school council if either of them receives a written request to do so from three members of the council.

The business of an extraordinary meeting must be confined to the purpose for which the meeting is called.

Extended leave of school council member

A school council member 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.

Casual Vacancies

A school council fills a casual vacancy by co-opting an eligible person to the relevant category. The person nominated to fill the casual vacancy serves the unexpired portion of the vacating member's term of office.

A casual vacancy is created when a person:

- dies
- becomes insolvent under administration
- is of unsound mind
- resigns in writing to the school principal or school council president
- is found guilty or convicted of an indictable offence or an offence that would be an indictable offence if it had been committed in Victoria
- ceases to be eligible for the particular membership category under which they were elected or co-opted
- is a registered offender within the meaning of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*
- is subject to any medical condition that would make them unable to fulfill the role of a member of school council
- is absent from three consecutive school council meetings without

special leave previously granted by the school council and subject to a decision of the school council

- in the school employee member category and goes on any form of leave with or without pay for more than six months.
- in the parent member category becomes a Department employee during their term of office in circumstances where this causes the school council to be in breach of the requirement that the majority of a school council's total membership must be persons who are not Department employees
- in the student member category, ceases to be enrolled in the school
- in the student member category, goes on any form of leave from the school (including an exchange) for a period of more than six months
- in the community member category becomes a student member during their term of office
- who is a member of another membership category, is appointed as a nominee member of the school council
- who is a nominee member becomes a parent member, school employee member, or community member of the school council
- is found to have been ineligible for election, co-option, or appointment to the council at the time of their election, co-option, or appointment

Where a student who is a member of the student member category on school council ceases to be enrolled in the school, a casual vacancy will be created for the remainder of the term of office.

If Year 12 students, who are serving a two-year term, graduate they are no longer enrolled at the school and therefore cannot remain on school council. However, these students are eligible to stay on council for the remainder of their Year 12 year, and until the school council election is held in the following year.

A casual vacancy is also created if a member of school council is appointed as a principal of the school, other than if the appointment is temporary. An appointment for more than 12 continuous weeks shall not be considered temporary.

Other considerations

Agenda

The agenda lists the business that school council will consider at the meeting. Some items are for information only, some for discussion and others for decision. In order to avoid the agenda being crowded with too much business to consider, a significant amount of work may be undertaken by subcommittees. Reports from these subcommittees are considered at council meetings when appropriate.

Most information regarding agenda topics to be discussed in council meetings will be provided by the principal or in reports from relevant individuals or subcommittees. Meeting papers should be sent out prior to the meeting date to allow councillors to reflect on the issues, to gather more information if necessary and to canvass the opinions of school community members. The wisest decisions are made from a sound knowledge base.

Effective and informed decision-making

For effective and informed decision-making at council meetings, there needs to be:

- a carefully prepared agenda and papers that are distributed at least five working days before the meeting
- frank and open discussion
- accurate records of decisions
- access to independent and external professional advice where appropriate.

Meeting etiquette

When discussing a topic, it is good practice, but not necessarily documented in the Standing Orders that:

- 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.

Length of meeting

School council meetings should require no longer than 2.5 hours, regardless of the setting. If business has not been concluded by the scheduled closing time for the meeting, the chair should ask school 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, for example, 15 minutes. A motion is necessary if the school council wants to extend the meeting.

Resources and links

Information, related policies and advice can be located in the Department's Policy and Advisory Library for schools www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal including:

School Council – Powers and Functions

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-powers-and-functions/policy

School Council – Conduct and Conflict of Interest

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-conduct/policy

School Council – Meetings

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-meetings/policy

School Council – Subcommittees

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-subcommittees/policy

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/gifts-benefits-and-hospitality/policy

Outside School Hours Care – Decision Making Regarding the Provision of OSHC

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy

Strategic Planning Online Tool (SPOT) – Login required

apps.edustar.vic.edu.au/spot

Other relevant resources:

Victorian Public Sector Commission –

Public Administration Act 2004 at the VPSC webpage

vpsc.vic.gov.au/about-vpsc/legislative-framework-the-public-administration-act-2004

1.4

Understanding the school

Why is this topic important?

To provide good governance, school councillors need to understand their school, what it seeks to achieve, and how it functions.

This means knowing about the organisation itself including areas such as the curriculum, teaching and learning program, support services, staffing structure, specialist programs, student numbers and demographics and physical facilities.

On completing this unit, school councillors should:

- be able to find information about the school
- be able to identify who's who at the school
- know about regional support services available to the school
- be aware of the school's curriculum, teaching and learning program and student assessment and reporting practices.

Finding out information about the school

The principal or school council president will usually welcome new school councillors with a package of information about the school.

This could include:

- promotional information given to families of prospective students
- the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan
- the school's Annual Report
- a map of the school noting the major facilities
- a list of any specialist programs, such as Performing Arts or English as an Additional Language
- minutes of the last school council meeting
- a list of policies, procedures and relevant information applying to schools located on the Department's website.

As the school council's role is to establish the broad direction and vision for the whole school, councillors should extend their knowledge beyond one specific area. Good sources of information are the principal and the school's most recent Annual Report to the school community.

Who's who at the school

As well as meeting the principal and teachers who are members of the school council, it is useful to find out who's who among the teaching staff. Government schools have three classes of employee: principal class, teachers and education support.

The principal is responsible for the delivery of a comprehensive curriculum plan, governance (in conjunction with the school council), managing financial and human resources and providing a safe learning environment. A school might also have one or more assistant principals responsible for significant areas or functions within the school, such as Transition, Years F–2 or VCE.

Leading teachers may have responsibilities across a range of school operations. They typically coordinate a number of staff to improve teaching and learning. Leading teachers usually have titles such as year level coordinator, transition coordinator or literacy coordinator.

The majority of teachers in a school are classroom teachers. They plan, prepare and teach programs to achieve specific student outcomes.

Each school also has education support employees who work in school administration and operations and support teachers and students in the delivery of educational programs. They include Business Managers, office managers, education staff and health and wellbeing staff.

If the school is operating a school council managed kindergarten or outside school hours care service, the school also employs the staff in the service.

When there is an agenda item concerning areas for which senior staff are responsible, school councillors may request them to address the council meeting.

Regional support services available to the school

The Department's regional offices support early childhood services, schools and higher education and skills service providers. The Department has four regions in Victoria: North-Eastern Victoria Region, North-Western Victoria Region, South-Eastern Victoria Region and South-Western Victoria Region.

Regions are responsible for supporting and monitoring the provision of early childhood and higher education and skills services along with planning, managing, supporting and reporting on the delivery of outcomes for children and students from 0–18 years. Through its regional offices, the **Schools and Regional Services: Department of Education and Training**, play a key role in supporting schools by providing a range of services including facilitating the establishment of networks and services for local communities.

Regional offices offer advice and guidance in a wide range of areas including school management, workforce planning, leadership, youth pathways, transitions and student wellbeing.



Curriculum and student assessment

Foundation to Year 10

Curriculum

The Victorian Curriculum Foundation to 10 (F–10) sets out what every student should learn during their first 11 years of schooling. The curriculum is the common set of knowledge and skills required by students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship. The Victorian Curriculum F–10 incorporates the Australian Curriculum and reflects Victorian priorities and standards.

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 sets out a single, coherent and comprehensive set of content descriptions and associated achievement standards to enable teachers to plan, monitor, assess and report on the learning achievement of every student.

Schools may also use the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) when developing teaching and learning programs for F–2. The VEYLDF describes the key knowledge and skills for children from birth to eight years.

Teaching and Learning program

Victorian schools value digital learning. This takes place in a technology-rich environment using computers and other devices such as iPads, digital cameras and a range of online resources and software for learning and teaching. Starting from Foundation, schools are integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into their teaching and learning program in ways that not only increase children's digital literacy, but improve their ability to create, investigate, collaborate and share knowledge. In some cases, ICT is overcoming barriers of isolation created by living in a remote location or having a disability.

Languages education is a core part of the curriculum and all schools are provided with additional funding in their Student Resource Package (SRP) to support the provision of a languages program. Schools have the flexibility to choose the language/s they provide in consultation with their community. Advice on how to select a language is available on the Department's website. Students (Years F–12) who do not have access to the study of a specific language in their school can attend language programs outside school hours at the Victorian School of Languages or at community language schools.

Assessment

All students are involved in an annual program of standardised assessment in addition to assessments completed by class teachers. Under the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are assessed annually on the same days using national tests in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy. The school receives feedback about the test results. The resulting data, which identifies individual student achievement also rates the school's performance on a national scale.

Councillors can view NAPLAN results on the MySchool website. The NAPLAN results in literacy and numeracy are presented in a way that shows each school's performance against statistically similar schools, based on student backgrounds, and all other Australian schools.

Senior secondary

Victorian government secondary schools offer a variety of curriculum options for senior secondary students to pursue interests, qualifications and their future beyond school. These are described below.

Victorian Certificate of Education

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is a course of study designed to be completed over a minimum of two years. It is usually undertaken over Years 11 and 12. It prepares students for university and further training or employment, and is an internationally recognised qualification. There are more than 90 studies (subjects) in the VCE. Students can start their VCE as early as Year 10 and about half of Year 10 students undertake one or more VCE units. It is also possible to undertake a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship within the VCE.

A VCE 'study' or subject is broken up into four units over two years. Each unit is half a year or two terms in length and is numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4. Units 1 and 2 can be taken as single units, but Units 3 and 4 must be taken as a sequence of two units. Students are awarded the VCE by satisfactory completion of a minimum of 16 units.

The school's VCE coordinator ensures each student is undertaking the right number of units and the right combination of units to meet VCE requirements.

Within the 16 units, students must satisfactorily complete at least three units from the English group, including a Unit 3 and 4 sequence. They also need three sequences of Units 3 and 4 studies in addition to the English requirement. These sequences can be from VCE studies or from vocational education and training (VET).

Students in Year 12 may also undertake a first-year university study that counts towards satisfactory completion of their VCE; this is called the Higher Education Studies in the VCE program.

The VCE Baccalaureate is an additional form of recognition for those students who choose to undertake the demands of studying both a higher-level mathematics and a language in their VCE program of study. To be eligible to receive the VCE Baccalaureate, the student must satisfactorily complete the VCE and receive a study score for each prescribed study component. The VCE program of study must include a:

- Unit 3 and 4 sequence in English or Literature or English Language with a study score of 30 or above, or
- Unit 3 and 4 sequence in EAL with a study score of 33 or above;
- Unit 3 and 4 sequence in either Mathematics Methods (CAS) or Specialist Mathematics;
- Unit 3 and 4 sequence in a VCE Language; and at least two other Units 3 and 4 sequences.

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is an accredited hands-on option for Year 11 and 12 students, offering practical work-related experience and learning. Like the VCE, the VCAL is an accredited secondary certificate. Students who undertake the VCAL are likely to be interested in further training at VET providers, doing an apprenticeship or traineeship, or getting a job directly after finishing school.

The VCAL is offered at three levels: Foundation, Intermediate or Senior. Students enrol in a VCAL learning program at the level that matches their skills and abilities. Students can gain one or more VCAL qualifications at different levels depending on their abilities and learning goals.

Students in Intermediate and Senior VCAL must undertake VET studies (see following section) as part of their qualification. If students start their VCAL and then decide they would like to complete their VCE, they can transfer between certificates. The VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook provides further advice for students wishing to transfer from the VCAL to the VCE.

The VCAL has four curriculum areas, called strands. These strands are Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Industry Specific Skills, Work Related Skills and Personal Development Skills.

A student's VCAL learning program must include at least one unit from each strand. A student is awarded a VCAL certificate when they successfully complete the course requirements outlined in the VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook. A unit of study can be one VCAL unit, one VCE unit or approximately 90 hours of VET units of competency and/or further education modules.

The school's VCAL coordinator is responsible for ensuring that VCAL students undertake the right number and combination of units to achieve their certificate.

Vocational Education and Training

Students who are interested in undertaking a vocationally oriented study program in a specific industry have the option of choosing to complete a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program as part of their VCE or VCAL studies.

VET programs provide students with a nationally recognised training qualification in conjunction with their VCE or VCAL.

VET programs are typically delivered through partnerships between schools and training providers. They enable students to take part in structured workplace learning and gain practical skills in the industry in which they are interested. VET programs include school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

Programs undertaken as part of the VCE or VCAL provide students with a pathway to university, further training or employment.

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships

In the past, many young people had to leave school to pursue an apprenticeship or traineeship. With the introduction of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, students can have the best of both worlds. Students taking part in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships undertake part-time paid employment, and structured training, while completing their VCE or VCAL.

The student enters into a training contract with an employer and has a training plan signed by the school that is formally registered with the VRQA. The school-based apprenticeship and traineeship becomes part of their study timetable, with the student spending some time during the normal school week in their employment and training.

Part-time apprenticeships and traineeships undertaken outside of school can also contribute to the VCE or VCAL.

Structured workplace learning

As part of a nationally recognised VET program, secondary school students can undertake structured workplace learning to acquire skills and knowledge in an industry setting. In Victoria, structured workplace learning is an important part of VET programs undertaken by VCE and VCAL students.

Reporting

The VRQA State Register provides a rich source of information on individual schools including their latest:

- Government School Performance Summary
- Annual Report to the school community.

Support to school councillors

The School Operations and Governance Unit (SOGU) of Schools and Regional Services provides advice and guidance to school councils on a range of governance issues. Councillors can contact SOGU directly by email at school.council@education.vic.gov.au or **03 7022 1343** or **03 7022 1345** for information and advice.

Councillors can also contact their regional office for information and advice.

School council training

Information relating to school council training, digital copies of the Improving School Governance modules and the Induction video for school councillors is available on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library under School Council – Training and Good Governance available at www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-training/policy.

Virtual live/ face-to-face training

The Department offers comprehensive face-to-face training free of cost to school councils of Victorian Government schools. The training is based on four modules of the **Improving School Governance (ISG) materials; Governance, Strategic Planning, Finance and School Council President**. Face-to-face training is accessed by contacting the provider, Synergistiq on **03 9946 6801** or email Synergistiq: sct@synergistiq.com

Interactive Online training

School council members can also access an interactive online training program featuring videos and activities on the five ISG training modules.

School councillors can self-register to access the Interactive Online training through The Big Canvas learning management system (LMS) and complete these modules in sections, in their own time and pace.

Online training can be accessed individually or in small groups, at a time and place convenient to participants.

Training can be completed as a whole module or in part. Participants can bookmark and return to a module at a later time.

Completion certificates can be downloaded at the conclusion of each online module.

Book Online Interactive training modules for school councillors at lms.learneyo.com/DETSC

Resources and links

Further information, related policies and advice can be located on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library for schools www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal including:

Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/annual-implementation-plan/policy

School Strategic Plan

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-strategic-plan/policy

International Student Program

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy

Structured Workplace Learning

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/structured-workplace-learning/policy

Vocational Education and Training (VET) Delivered to Secondary Students

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/vocational-education-and-training-vet-delivered-secondary-students/policy

Curriculum Programs Foundation to 10

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/curriculum-programs/policy

School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships/policy

Other relevant resources:

Community Language Schools on the Department's website

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/languages/Pages/clsschools.aspx

MySchool website

myschool.edu.au

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships on the VCAA webpage

vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vet/apprenticeships/Pages/index.aspx

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority F–10 Curriculum on the VCAA website

vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/foundation10/f10index.aspx

Victorian Early Years and Development Framework

vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/Pages/Index.aspx?Redirect=1

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Vocational Education and Training (VET) on the VCAA webpage

www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/studentguides/return-to-study/Pages/AboutVET.aspx

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning on the VCAA webpage

www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vcal/Pages/AboutVCAL.aspx

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework on the VCAA webpage

www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/veyldf/Pages/Index.aspx

Victorian School of Languages website

vsl.vic.edu.au

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority State Register page

vrqa.vic.gov.au/aboutus/Pages/state-register.aspx

Handout A1

Role of school councillors: scenarios

Scenario	Within the functions of school council? Yes	Within the functions of school council? No	Issues and how they might be resolved
<p>1. The school council at a school in regional Victoria is recommending at tomorrow's council meeting that the school cleaning contract be awarded to Nifty Cleaners. You have just been made aware that the owner of Nifty Cleaners is the brother-in-law of a school councillor.</p>			
<p>2. A local franchise of a fast food company has offered to donate four trampolines with attached safety netting to the school. Their logos would be attached to the equipment but there would be no other advertising. Should the school council accept the offer?</p>			
<p>3. A couple of parents have expressed concern to you about the performance of a particular member of staff. Should school council consider instigating a performance review process for the school's teachers?</p>			
<p>4. At the request of a group of parents, the school council has decided to investigate the feasibility of running a before and after school care program.</p>			
<p>5. School council approves the school's budget for the forthcoming school year at its December meeting.</p>			

Scenario	Within the functions of school council? Yes	Within the functions of school council? No	Issues and how they might be resolved
<p>6. School council is considering whether its role includes encouraging parents, students and community members to contribute to the development of the School Strategic Plan.</p>			
<p>7. It has been suggested that school council establish a standard contract and users' guide for groups and individuals who want to hire the school hall.</p>			
<p>8. Several school councillors feel it is time that the school uniform policy was reviewed.</p>			
<p>9. As a councillor of a primary school, you are aware that some parents in your small community do not want multi-aged classes next year. Should this issue be raised at the next council meeting?</p>			
<p>10. The principal asks the school council to approve the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.</p>			
<p>11. You were elected to council as a parent member. You are also a member of the school's parents and friends' group. School council has proposed changes to the volunteers' policy, some of the changes that are concerning the parents and friends' group. The group has asked you to vote against the recommendations when they are put at the council meeting. As a school council member, how would you respond?</p>			

Handout B1

Sample Standing Orders for School Council

These sample Standing Orders are intended as a guide only. A school council may determine its own Standing Orders but they must be consistent with the legal requirements set out in the Act, the Regulations, Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils and Department guidelines.

School Council Standing Orders

Introduction

The purpose of these Standing Orders is to assist school council to operate efficiently and effectively within the legal framework and Department guidelines for school councils.

School council membership

The membership of the school council according to the Constituting Order is:

No.	Category	No.	Category	No.	Category	No.	Category	No.	Category
	Total Members		Parents		School employees		Students		Community

Co-option of community members

The community members, included in the Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils, will be co-opted to the school council at a special meeting of council held as soon as practicable after the declaration of the poll and before office bearers are elected. If the appointment of the community members either cannot be resolved at the special meeting called or on the resumption of the adjourned special meeting, the school council may proceed to the first meeting of the school council to elect office bearers.

Office bearers

The school council will have the following office bearer positions:

- president
- vice-president
- treasurer.

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.

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.

Subcommittees

The school council will have the following subcommittees:

- Finance
- Education
- Grounds and buildings.

It is recommended that there is a subcommittee for the outside school hours care or kindergarten service if one is provided by the school.

Each subcommittee will be chaired by a member of school council, unless otherwise decided by the council.

A subcommittee must include at least one school council member and have at least three members.

Meetings

Regular

The school council will meet twice a term on the first Monday of each month. The meeting will commence at 7pm and will finish no later than 9.30pm unless agreed by the school council. Meetings will be held in the conference room.

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 school 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 school 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 councillors
- The president or the principal must call this meeting by sending a notice to all school council members, providing 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

- 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 Department employees. Any parent members on the council who also work for the Department are counted as Department employees for the purpose of a quorum
- If at the end of 30 minutes after the appointed time of the council meeting there is no quorum present, the meeting will stand adjourned to a time and place determined by the councillors present
- A member of the school council may be present at a council meeting, in person or by video conferencing or teleconferencing.

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-Department employee 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.

Tied votes

When a vote is tied, for example: an even number of people are for and against a decision, the president or presiding member, has a second or casting vote.

Absence of the president and other members from a meeting

- If the president is unable to preside at a school council meeting, and if a vice-president has been appointed, the vice-president must preside at the meeting
- If the president is unable to preside at a school council meeting, and there is no vice-president appointed, the school council must decide which member of the school council will chair the meeting. An employee of the Department, including the principal, is ineligible to chair the school council meeting
- If a council member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the principal prior to the meeting.

Conflict of interest

If a school council member or a member of their immediate family has any perceived or actual conflict of interest (either financial or non-financial) 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.

The declaration of interest will be included in the minutes of the meeting. If the conflict of interest involves a principal or Business Manager it must be entered onto the Conflict of Interest Register on eduPay and managed appropriately.

Extended leave of a council member

- A school councillor may apply in writing to the president for extended leave of up to three consecutive meetings
- If a councillor is granted extended leave, their membership is excluded in determining the requirement for a quorum of not less than half the members currently holding office.

Agenda

The principal will ensure an agenda is prepared for each regular meeting and distribute the agenda, draft minutes from the previous meeting and meeting papers such as subcommittee reports, principal's and president's reports to school council members no less than five days before the meeting.

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 councillors 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.

Length of meetings and extensions of meeting times

If business has not been concluded within 2.5 hours of the council meeting commencing, the presiding member will ask school councillors if 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 15 minutes.

Minutes

- The principal will ensure a record of each school council meeting is kept and that draft minutes are prepared after each meeting and distributed to school council members prior to the next 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 subcommittees tabled; and decisions 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.

Conduct of meetings

- School councillors must abide by the Code of Conduct and locally agreed etiquette.

School council principles

The 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, the following etiquette will be observed by members:

- 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 will 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 will 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 will stay calm regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic.

