

## School Council Key functions

The school council has particular functions in setting and monitoring the school's direction.

School councils have three main responsibilities:

- finance: overseeing the development of the school's annual budget and ensuring proper records are kept of the school's financial operation
- strategic planning: participating in the development and monitoring of the school strategic plan
- policy development and review: developing, reviewing and updating policies that reflect a school's values and support the school's broad direction outlined in its strategic plan.

Other key functions of school councils include:

- raising funds for school related purposes
- maintaining school grounds and facilities
- entering into contracts
- reporting annually to the school community and the Department
- creating interest in the school in the wider community
- representing and taking the views of the community into account
- regulating and facilitating after-hours use of school premises and grounds
- operating a children's service at the school.

### Finance

The school council is responsible for overseeing the school's financial performance. It is a legal and Department requirement that councils make sure that monies coming into schools are properly expended and authorised.

Most schools have a finance sub-committee which handles many of council's routine financial responsibilities including the development of the annual budget.

School councils help develop the annual budget and are responsible for ensuring that schools have a functioning and effective system of internal controls. The subcommittee presents the annual budget to the school council for discussion and approval.

Council monitors the school's financial performance against the budget in conjunction with the principal. The convenor of the finance committee, as elected from council members, is preferably a non-Department parent member or a community member. The business manager/bursar should not hold this position. The convenor may be appointed as treasurer by council.

#### Annual budget

The school council works to get the best results for the money spent through a carefully planned annual budget. The finance subcommittee and the principal develop the annual school budget. The annual budget outlines the total revenue for the school year, the distribution of funds and how the budget will support the goals set out in the school's strategic plan.

School funds usually come from three sources:

- Funding from the Victorian Government through the Student Resource Package (SRP). The SRP is the school's major source of funding and is provided to support improvement in learning outcomes for students
- Funds in school bank accounts and associated interest
- Locally raised funds, for example, fund-raising activities. Schools may receive other state or commonwealth government funding for specific projects or purposes

### Strategic planning

One of the key functions of a school council is to contribute to the establishment of the broad vision and direction of a school through strategic planning.

Strategic planning is the process of reflecting on a school's past performance, establishing future directions and deciding on what will constitute success.

School self-evaluation provides an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which the school achieved its goals from the four-year school strategic plan and the one-year annual implementation plan.

The [Framework for Improving Student Outcomes](#) (FISO) outlines a clear process for developing the strategic plan.

### **School strategic plan**

The school strategic plan is the school's statement to its community about what it stands for and what it intends to do over the next four years to improve student outcomes. It outlines the school values, the school's direction, its goals, targets and key strategies for improvement. When completed, the school strategic plan is endorsed by school council, signed by the principal and school council president and submitted to the Secretary for approval.

### **Annual implementation plan**

The annual implementation plan outlines how the strategic plan will be implemented, monitored and evaluated. The plan contains the goals and targets from the school strategic plan, breaking these down into 12-month targets. The school council endorses the plan. For further information on annual implementation planning.

### **Annual report**

The annual report is a legislated requirement under the Education and Training Reform Act 2017 and the National Education Agreement 2008.

The annual report provides the community with information about the school's performance in implementing their improvement strategies and how the school's resources have been used. Annual reports are endorsed by school council and signed by both the principal and school council president. They are made available to the school community at a public meeting organised by the school principal and published on the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority state register.

## **Policy development and review**

Clearly written policies set out the school's position on a range of issues. They are important tools as they reflect the school's values and support the school's broad direction as outlined in its strategic plan.

Good policies are essential because they demonstrate that the school is being operated in an efficient manner and ensure that there will be consistency in decisions and in school operations.

A school council will develop a policy because:

- Departmental policy requires a school to have a policy on a particular topic
- council decides to issue guidance about an aspect of implementation of its strategic plan
- council decides to set out the school's position on a major issues within its powers and functions.

### **Required policies**

Due to legislation and state wide approaches the Department requires schools to have certain policies in place.

### **Investments**

The school council's role, if investing, is to consider and manage any financial risks and to ensure that all legal requirements are met.

### **Parent payments**

School councils develop and approve a school-level policy, reflecting the Department's policy, to be provided to parents. There are three categories of education or services that school councils can request payments for from parents: essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions.

Principals and school councils have the responsibility of making sure that no student is disadvantaged if parents are unable to make payments.

### **Student dress code**

School councils have the authority to develop and implement dress codes for their students as outlined in legislation relating to dress codes.

Schools work with their school communities in developing and reviewing dress codes, implementing and enforcing dress codes.

All dress codes must meet:

- human rights and anti-discrimination requirements
- include an exemption process
- health and safety considerations
- requirements relating to uniform supply arrangements.

Schools also work with the State Schools' Relief to support students in need as well as supporting their fundraising activities.

### Other policies

Typically, school councils also develop policies about a small number of other topics common to most schools such as visitors, volunteers in schools, camps, excursions and outdoor activities, community use of school facilities, canteen and other school food services.

### School Restructure

School councils play a key role in school mergers. Councils must formally recommend to the Minister for Education that the school will close and merge with another school or group of schools. Councils must also agree on a name or interim name of the merged school in consultation with the other merging schools and agree to the date for the merged school to commence.

### Review

This policy was approved by School Council in November 2020. It is due for review in 2022.

## Distinctions in roles and responsibilities of school council.

Understanding the functional split between the principal of the school and the school council 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. 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 activities that school councils may be involved in:

Area of activity	The school council ...	The principal ...
Strategic direction of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develops the broad direction and vision for the school, using guidelines provided by the Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>leads development of curriculum – teaching and learning programs</li> <li>determines teacher, subject and time allocations; timetable; class sizes; and structures</li> </ul>
Student dress code policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develops student dress code policy in close consultation with the wider school community</li> <li>consults with the school community before adopting changes to this policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implements the student dress code developed by school council in consultation with the wider community</li> <li>considers and, where appropriate, grants exemptions to dress code guidelines for individual students</li> <li>enforces the student dress code in line with DET policy</li> </ul>
Staff employment and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>approves employment of some staff e.g. casual replacement teachers, canteen or maintenance staff, however, <b>not</b> on-going staff</li> <li>recommends to the Secretary of the Department the appointment of a principal in accordance with principal selection processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is responsible (as delegate of the Secretary of the Department) for the employment and management of persons in the Teaching Service (including non-teaching staff)</li> <li>manages the performance, development and conduct of DET and school council staff</li> </ul>

Area of activity	The school council ...	The principal ...
Camps and excursions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is responsible for approving interstate and international visits, excursions requiring sea or air travel, excursions involving weekends or vacations, and adventure activities. All relevant school councils are responsible for approving listed joint activities involving another school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is responsible for approving day excursions. All relevant principals are responsible for approving day excursions involving another school</li> </ul>
Buildings and grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oversees school cleaning, and in regional schools only, enters into contracts for school cleaning</li> <li>• enters into contracts for building and grounds improvements</li> <li>• makes decisions about the hiring and shared use of school facilities in accordance with Department policy requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is responsible for maintenance of school buildings and grounds</li> <li>• monitors implementation of contracts</li> <li>• exercises a general oversight of school buildings and grounds to ensure they are kept in good condition and order</li> </ul>
Child Safe Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approves policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Child Safe Standards</li> <li>• reviews existing contracts in consultation with the principal and ensures future contracts address the requirements of the Child Safe Standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implements Child Safe Standards policies and procedures</li> <li>• with staff, develops strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school and allocates roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies</li> <li>• informs the school community about the strategies and roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• with staff, periodically reviews the effectiveness of the strategies and revises them if appropriate</li> <li>• with staff, ensures the school implements practices for a child-safe environment</li> </ul>
School review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participates in the Pre-review Self-evaluation</li> <li>• value-adds to the review as defined in the terms of reference (e.g. participation in focus groups etc.)</li> <li>• is presented with the findings of the report and accepts the report</li> </ul> <p>The school council president:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is a member of the core School Review Panel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keeps the whole school community and council informed about the school review</li> <li>• leads the Pre-review Self-evaluation in consultation with the whole school community</li> <li>• is a member of the core School Review Panel</li> <li>• presents the findings of the review report to the school staff and school council</li> </ul>

Area of activity	The school council ...	The principal ...
<p><b>Strategic and Annual Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contributes to the finalisation of the School Strategic Plan following the school review</li> <li>• contributes to the development of the Annual Implementation Plan</li> <li>• president endorses the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan in SPOT</li> <li>• ensures regular monitoring of the Annual Implementation Plan, including key risks to achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engages the staff and school community in development of the School Strategic Plan following review</li> <li>• engages the staff and school community in the development of the Annual Implementation Plan</li> <li>• engages the staff and school community in the monitoring of progress against annual targets</li> <li>• endorses the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan in SPOT</li> </ul>
<p><b>Annual report to the school community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• endorses the Annual Report by April 30</li> <li>• president attests to the contents of the Annual Report in SPOT by April 30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prepares, with the school council, the Annual Report</li> <li>• endorses the Annual Report</li> <li>• attests to the contents of the Annual Report</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outside school hours care or kindergarten service</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decides whether to establish a service or change operating models or service provider</li> <li>• is the legal entity under the National Law of a school council managed operating model, and therefore has the role of approved provider. As approved provider, the council nominates people with management or control, noting this does not take away from the approved providers' legal responsibilities</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• receives regular program reports from the OSHC or kindergarten provider</li> <li>• regularly monitors the provider's compliance with the requirements of the National Law</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engages the school community in the decision-making process to establish or change operating models or service provider</li> <li>• informs the school community and school council about the service on a regular basis</li> <li>• may be nominated by school council as the person with management or control for a school council managed operating model</li> </ul>