

BNW School Governance Standing Orders

BNW enjoys a unique level of community involvement and support. The role of BNW's School Council, Sub-committees and Working Groups is vital to the smooth running and strategic growth of the community as a whole. This document is designed to recognise and value the time and energy that is volunteered by community members and staff. Structure, transparency and guidance on the three levels of School Governance ensures we are meeting Departmental requirements while sustaining the level of community support, representation and input that we benefit from so greatly.

Throughout this document, unless otherwise stated, all procedures and guidelines are relevant to both the School Council, its sub-committees and working groups.

Our School Vision & Values

BNWPS is a joyful, warm and colourful school with a progressive approach to teaching and learning.

In our creative and positive environment, students are empowered to be adaptable, confident and kind young people, with a strong sense of self.

At our heart is a welcoming and diverse community who champion the individuality of every student.
Deeds not words.

AUTHENTICITY - RESPECT - CONNECTION - CREATIVITY

Roles & Responsibilities

BNW's **School Council** is its governing body. Some of the key functions of BNW's School Council are:

- to establish the broad vision and direction for the school through the process of reflecting on past performance, establishing future directions and deciding what will constitute success;
- resource management, including budgets, contracts and maintaining the school's grounds and buildings;
- building and maintaining community interest and engagement, including but not limited to seeking the views and experiences of the wider community and reporting annually to the community and Department.

School council has procedures for training, membership, meetings, agendas, minutes and strategic planning that are outlined further in this document.

Sub-committees assist the council in the work that needs to be done and report regularly at School Council meetings. They provide advice and make recommendations to the School Council, which has the final responsibility for making decisions. The decision-making responsibilities of the council should not be compromised by the work of any sub-committee. The membership, purpose and terms of reference of sub-committees are determined by the council. Sub-committees will be chaired by a member of the School Council unless otherwise approved by the School Council.

Working groups are teams of interested and skilled community members who collaborate on particular projects or events throughout the year. The work performed by these groups has a specific practical focus and comes to a conclusion when objectives have been met. While formal minutes are not required a record of meeting outcomes should be kept and updates provided either to the sub-committee the working group has been formed under or School Council as appropriate. There is an expectation that interested school council members or leadership could attend working group meetings. The output of the working group whether it be funds raised or reports developed remains the property of BNWPS any distribution of funds or reports would be under the purview of the School Council.

For example: A Trivia night working group would report to CET in the lead up to trivia night. The CET and School Business Manager would oversee the budget as per the School Council agreed budget process.

MEMBERSHIP

Equal Opportunity

BNW, its School Council, sub-committees and working groups support equal participation by family members and carers from a range of backgrounds. We believe that the success of the school and its community is enhanced by the diversity of its participants, and follow the Victorian State Government's Equal Opportunity policy.

BNW acknowledges that council/committee participation is easier for some groups than for others and is committed to being inclusive in its processes. BNW's School Council and sub-committees will therefore encourage and seek a diverse range of participants across cultural and social backgrounds, genders, those of diverse sexuality, ability, faith, culture, life experience and professional background, those from a range of family structures and parents or carers with children at various year levels of the school.

Some parents may find it difficult to physically attend council/committee meetings, but may have important contributions to make. BNW will therefore encourage and seek different methods of communication and participation including but not limited to the use of online tools such as video communication and collaborative documents.

The committee will support participation for people where English is not their first language, through collaborations in the school community or with the use of interpreters or translated material where required.

Code of Conduct

BNW's School Council and sub-committee members are expected to uphold the school values throughout all meetings, discussions and interactions with other members and the school community. Attempts should be made to understand and accommodate the skill and needs of all members and discussions should focus on finding mutually agreeable solutions to identified issues in a respectful manner.

Members are expected to understand that their own perspectives and experiences fall within a larger school context. Members are asked to be consistent, objective and transparent when making decisions and to recognise that decisions need to be made in light of what is best for all community members, not individual students or families. If members are requested by a community member to represent a particular view at School Council, they are asked to guide the community member to appropriate avenues for raising concerns or prior to the meeting request an appropriate agenda item be added.

School Councillors and sub-committee members are asked to respect decisions made by the School Council and to keep the details of conversations confidential. While the overall outcome of decisions and the reasoning behind those decisions can be discussed, it is inappropriate to identify individual Council or Committee members perspectives. The School Council attempts to make all decisions on a consensus basis and asks that School Councillors respect the decision once made.

Committee members are asked to respect the rights, dignity and worth of every individual within the school community regardless of their gender, ability, sexuality, cultural background or religion. We foster an environment that encourages individuals to participate for their enjoyment and benefit, and which supports individuals extending themselves outside of their comfort zone and engaging in discussion and debate.

The School Council President and sub-committee chairs are responsible for the management of meeting protocols, membership and participation, however support is available from the school's leadership team, should it be required. Any ongoing concern should be raised by the chair with the School Council President, BNW's principal or assistant principal so that further support and assistance can be provided to find solutions.

Eligibility

School council and sub-committee members must be a family member or carer of a student currently attending BNWPS, or provide a reason why they are an appropriate person to sit on the council or sub-committee.

School Council Elections

Principals must conduct School Council elections in accordance with the legal framework of Ministerial Order No 52. Principals are responsible for the conduct of the election or may appoint a person to act on their behalf. School council elections include a nomination process and a ballot, if required.

School Council elections must be held in February or March each year and be completed by 31 March unless varied by a Ministerial Order. Principals must update School Council membership electronically by 30 April.

DET, parent and community member ratios within School Council membership is expected to follow the constituting order outlined in Schedule 7. The school's constituting order will be reviewed in term 4 of each year.

Members of School Council are expected to read through relevant modules of the Guide to Improving School Governance and training can be provided for some roles within council. Members hold office for approximately 2 years, with half the membership being reviewed each year.

Current Constituting Order (2023)

Brunswick North West Primary School's current Council Constituting Order includes:

15 members. No more than 1/3 of members may be DET members employed at the school:

- Up to 5 DETVic members
- Up to 8 Parent members
- Up to 2 Community members

Joining a sub-committee

Members of a **sub-committee** may be School Council and non-School Council members. Sub-committees must have at least three members including at least one School Council member. Sub-committees have procedures for agendas, minutes and reporting to the council. The standing membership of the sub-committee is 2 years and tenures will be staggered to ensure continuity. Membership is reviewed every year and can be renewed indefinitely.

There are two ways community members can join a BNW sub-committee. Individuals may show an expression of interest to the committee chair, indicating the contribution they would like to make to the committee, or individuals may be approached by committee members, in an effort to increase diversity and/or representation from the school community. Once initial contact has been made, the committee chair will provide prospective members with a copy of these standing orders.

Membership of BNW's sub-committees is automatically approved, however all sub-committee members are expected to adhere to standing orders and may be asked to review their membership by the committee chair, should these expectations not be met. Sub-committee membership is open throughout the year. Membership lists of BNW's School Council and sub-committees are published in each relevant report at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year.

Extended Leave of a Council Member

A member of a School Council may apply in writing to the President for extended leave of up to three consecutive meetings. If leave is granted to a member, his/her membership is excluded in determining the requirement for a quorum of not less than half the members of the School Council currently holding office.

Casual Vacancies

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

Casual vacancies are created through a number of means, the most relevant of which is when a person is absent from three consecutive meetings of the School Council or sub-committee without special leave previously granted by the School Council President or sub-committee chair.

MEETINGS

Meeting Schedules

School council must meet at least eight times per year and at least once per school term. School council dates and sub-committee dates are published in the school calendar at the beginning of the year and any rescheduling should be avoided if possible.

School council must call a public meeting (Annual Meeting) at least once each year and report the proceedings of the council since the date of the previous Annual Meeting. The council must present the annual report to the meeting and, if the School Council accounts have been audited, present a copy of the audited accounts.

Extraordinary Meetings

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 in his/her absence, the principal must call an extraordinary meeting of the School Council if either of them receives a written request to do so from three members of the council.

Open/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 council. Visitors have a right to speak but must do so through the person convening 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.

The principal, assistant principal and School Council President are able to attend any meeting of any sub-committee or working group as a guest and ex-officio member (a member by right of their position).

Meeting Agendas

The agenda lists the business 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 sub-committees. Reports from these sub-committees 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 sub-committees. Meeting papers and reports should be uploaded to the shared team drive (Wally Snr.) by the Friday prior to the School Council 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.

Reports must be in clear, concise and professional language. All reports should be reflective of the key issues raised in committee meetings or agreed to by a consensus of committee members. BNW School Council and its sub-committees are expected to follow consistent procedures for agendas, minutes, reports and other supporting documentation.

Any additional agenda items should be emailed to the School Council President one week prior to each School Council meeting. Each School Council agenda will be collaboratively formed by the School Council President and principal on the Thursday prior to the meeting. If a requested agenda item is not included, the principal or School Council President is responsible for responding to the request and explaining why the item was not brought up for discussion.

Legal Requirements

The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 set out certain legal requirements in relation to the operation of School Council meetings. The following legal requirements cannot be overridden by the Standing Orders determined by a School Council.

Who presides meetings

The School Council President must preside at meetings of the School Council. If the President is unable to preside at a council meeting, a member of the council (other than an employee of the Department) elected by the School Council must preside. A Department employee is ineligible to be School Council President.

At sub-committees, the chair presides over meetings of the assembled group and conducts its business in an orderly fashion. Apart from Education Committee, which hold the school's Assistant Principal as the chair, each sub-committee's chair should be elected annually. Sub-committees will be convened by a member of School Council unless otherwise approved by School Council.

Quorum

A School Council meeting must operate with a quorum. 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. Parent members on School Council, employed by the Department to work at BNWPS are counted as Department representatives for the purpose of a quorum. Other parents employed by the Department, but who do not work at the school are counted as parent representatives.

A member of the School Council may be present in person or by videoconferencing 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.

Financial matters

As of 2020 the School Council is responsible for overseeing the financial matters that had previously been the purview of the Finance Committee.

Financial reports are presented to school council no later than seven days prior to the School Council meeting. Time is allocated within the agenda to go through the reports and ask questions. Council members have until the following meeting to ask additional questions or seek clarification on issues prior to endorsing the reports at that subsequent meeting.

- Engage with the school & Sub-Committees on annual spending requirements to prepare a draft budget in line with the strategic plan for submission to School Council for approval
- Monitor, support and report on the various commercial aspects of the school including, but not limited to: Sprout, OSHC, fundraising, uniform sales, building hire, etc.
- Make recommendations on financial planning, parent payments, capital expenditure and investment to School Council for approval

Length of Meetings

School council meetings should be 1.5 hours in length with an upper limit of 2.5 hours, regardless of the setting. If business has not been concluded after 2 hours, the chair should ask councillors whether they wish to defer the rest of the business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting by a specified period of time of 15 minutes. A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting. After two extensions of 15 minutes, the 'Sunset Clause' is brought into effect and the meeting is concluded.

A time-keeper can be appointed to assist with keeping meetings to schedule.

Meeting Etiquette

In order to have respectful yet robust conversations, all council/committee members must demonstrate the following meeting etiquette in addition to adhering to the Code of Conduct:

- only one person talks at a time
- all requests to speak are directed to the chair
- 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 chair indicates that the topic of discussion is closed, no further comments are made
- jargon or insider knowledge is avoided
- regardless of how difficult or challenging the topic, everyone stays calm and respectful

Confidentiality

As part of the deliberating that occurs at School Council and its sub-committees, from time-to-time council/committee members will hear more personal or confidential information that is not appropriate for discussion outside that meeting. This occurs so that issues can be discussed openly and informed decisions can be made. So that this can happen, members must keep their discussions strictly confidential.

School Council and its sub-committees often draft policies or initiate planning for the school's future. When council and committee members become aware of upcoming changes to the school program, participants must not talk about the drafts or what is expected to happen until permitted by the School Council.

The School Council President and sub-committee chairs are responsible for regularly communicating with, and seeking feedback from the school community.

Conflict of Interest and bias

Conflicts of interest are an inevitable part of organisational life and many arise without any wrongdoing. The community trusts council and committee members to behave in an ethical and impartial manner. Conflicts of interest that are not effectively identified or managed put the School Council's reputation at risk and jeopardise the community's confidence in school governance.

A potential or actual conflict of interest occurs when a council or committee member's personal interests may influence, or may be seen to influence, their duty. A personal interest may be a preference, relationship, connection, bias, personal property, hobby, or a desire to help family and friends. Personal interests can also be pecuniary (financial) or non-pecuniary.

Perceived conflicts of interest occur where a reasonable person might suspect a council or committee member is subject to a real conflict of interest, whether or not one actually exists. Perceived conflicts may be just as damaging as 'actual' conflicts. All council and committee members are obliged to identify these risks as well, and take action to mitigate them.

If a School Council member or a member of his or her immediate family has an actual 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. Furthermore, this member must not be present during the relevant discussion unless invited to do so by the person presiding at the meeting and must not be present when a vote is taken on the matter. A member's temporary absence for this purpose does not affect the meeting quorum. The declaration of interest should be included in the minutes of the meeting. This also applies to sub-committee meetings where declarations of conflict of interest must also be made and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Informed Decision-Making

School council and sub-committee members are responsible to be familiar with the aims and intentions of the the school and/or the particular committee and be willing to work towards those aims with the group. 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.

Sub-committee chairs are required to engage School Council in the decision-making process when decisions impact the school's functioning, growth and strategic management.

Voting

Decisions of the majority of the members of the School Council who are eligible to vote and are present at the School Council meeting, are decisions of the whole School Council. Decisions are made by voting. School councillors need to ensure their vote is based solely on the best interests of the students. All decisions of council, the motions as well as the name of the person that moved the motion and the seconder, should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

When a vote is tied, the School Council President has a second or casting vote.

Member Absences

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, an apology should be submitted to the executive officer (the principal, or in the case of sub-committees, the chair) and it should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Minutes

Minutes are the official record of the proceedings at a meeting. Generally, a designated council or sub-committee 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 President, secretary or chair to members before the next School Council or sub-committee meeting where they are considered, confirmed, printed and signed.

The School Council should keep the community informed about its 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 2000.

BNW's School Council, Sub-Committees and Working Groups

BNW's School Council is supported by five sub-committees each of which has at least one member from School Council and five Working Groups.

Sub-Committees

- Buildings and Grounds
- Community Events Team
- Education Committee
- Communications Committee
- OSHC Committee

Working Groups are responsive to the needs of the school - some exist for a set period of time, while others will be formed on a task specific basis. Working Groups must be endorsed by the principal. Some Working Groups that have supported BNW's School Council and sub-committees are:

- Sprout Working Group
- Garden Working Group
- Sports Working Group
- WMM Working Group
- Pizza Working Group

At the first meeting following the Annual Public Meeting, each committee shall elect a chair. The Chair may be a member of School Council. If the elected Chair is not a member of Council, Council will be asked to endorse the Chair and either appoint a liaison or agree that the Chair/Chairs shall be invited to attend all School Council meetings in order to participate in discussions.

All Council sub-committees shall:

- Recognise that, within the School, the Council is the ultimate decision making body in the formation of localised school policies
- In their area of responsibility, recommend courses of action to the Council
- By the Wednesday prior to each Council meeting, through the chair, provide the Executive Officer in writing with any recommendations for Council consideration
- By the Friday prior to each Council meeting, through the Chair, provide the Executive Officer with a written report of the minutes. Minutes and reports will be located on the School Council's share drive
- Implement Council policy decisions as directed
- Prepare submissions for programs to be considered when budgets are prepared, in writing to the Executive Officer 14 days prior to the second last School Council meeting of the year.
- With the approval of Council, have the power in any particular year to co-opt any person whose special talent will benefit the work of the committee

The chairs of the sub-committees shall:

- Call all meetings and provide all committee members (including the Council President and Executive Officer as ex-officio members) with an agenda prior to each meeting
- In the event of his/her absence nominate another member of the committee to act as chairperson of the meeting
- By the Wednesday prior to each Council meeting provide the Executive Officer in writing with any recommendations for Council consideration
- By the Friday prior to each Council meeting provide the Executive Officer with a written report of the minutes
- Provide the Executive Officer, in writing, with a meeting schedule for the following year by the first School Council meeting of Term 4
- Provide submissions for programs and general expenditure to be considered when budgets are prepared, in writing to the Executive Officer by the first School Council meeting of Term 4
- Ensure these guidelines are carried out

Subcommittee scopes:

a. Buildings & Grounds Committee

- Make recommendations to Council on aspects of the maintenance and minor works plan for the School
- Encourage the participation of the School community in maintenance and improvement of school buildings and grounds through appropriate working bees
- Maximize the outcomes for the school community from the funds allocated to buildings and grounds development and maintenance

b. Community Events Team

- To uphold the values of the school – specifically Connectedness through events that build and support connections and a sense of belonging
- To work in cooperation with the Principal, the School Council, Junior School Council (JSC), and staff
- To organise events that benefit the school and community both financially and socially
- To enthusiastically encourage and support the participation of families in the school life of their children

c. Education Committee

- Consult with the school community and make recommendations to Council on aspects of the School's policies
- Inform the community of education approaches to further engage parents and carers
- Celebrate and promote educational success
- Report regularly to Council on the development of policies and programs
- Respond to Council initiatives and Department requirements

d. Communications

- Work in partnership with the school to design a Communication Strategy, aligned to the expectations of the school's executive team and the School Council's Standing Orders.
- Support the school to strategically align and standardise all communication processes
- Support the school to identify, prioritise and respond to communication challenges as well as celebrate successes

e. OSHC

- Identify and make recommendations to School Council on the needs of the children and parents/carers using the program
- Act as an advisory committee to the OSHC Coordinator when implementing financial, program and DET mandated changes and assist in communicating these changes to the wider school community
- Engage and represent the voices of OSHC families both to OSHC staff and the wider school community

Brunswick North West School Council

Date - February 2023

Review - February 2024