

School Council Elections – Information for Parents

School Council Elections 2017

School council membership and elections

School councils comprise parents, the principal, staff and often community members. School council elections are held in February or March each year. All parents or guardians of students enrolled at the school are eligible to vote for parent members, and staff vote for staff members. Community members are co-opted by the school council.

School council membership

A school council's constituting Order specifies the total size of the council and the number of members in each category. Most members of a school council stand for election at the school where they are parents or Department of Education and Training (DET) employee members. Other members can be co-opted by the council within the limits of the constituting Order. A school council must be between 6 and 15 members in total size and can have up to three categories of membership.

What is a school council and what does it do?

All government schools in Victoria have a school council. They are legally formed bodies that are given powers to set the key directions of a school within centrally provided guidelines. In doing this, a school council is able to directly influence the quality of education that the school provides for its students.

Who is on the school council?

There are three possible categories of membership:

A mandated elected Parent category-

Because parents have such an important part to play in schools, there is an elected parent member category. More than one third of the total members must be from this category. Department of Education and Training (DET) employees can be Parent members at their child's school.

A mandated elected DET employee category-

Members of this category may make up no more than one third of the total membership of school council. The principal of the school is automatically one of these members.

An optional Community member category-

Its members are co-opted by a decision of the council because of their special skills, interests or experiences. DET employees are not eligible to be Community members.

Generally the term of office for members is about two years. The term of office of half the members expires each year, creating vacancies for the annual school council elections.

Why is Parent membership so important?

Parents on school councils provide important viewpoints and have valuable skills that can help shape the direction of the school.

Those parents who become active on a school council find their involvement satisfying in itself and may also find that their children feel a greater sense of belonging.

How can you become involved?

The most obvious way is to vote in the elections, which are held in Term 1 each year. However, ballots are only held if more people nominate as candidates than there are positions vacant.

In view of this, you might seriously consider:

- standing for election as a member of the school council
- encouraging another person to stand for election.

Do I need special experience to be on school council?

No. What you do need is an interest in your child's school and the desire to work in partnership with others to help shape the school's future.

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What do you need to do to stand for election?

The principal will issue a notice of election and call for nominations following the commencement of Term 1 each year. All school council elections must be completed by the end of March.

If you decide to stand for election, you can arrange for someone to nominate and second you as a candidate or you can nominate yourself in the Parent category.

DET employees whose child is enrolled in a school in which they are not employed are eligible to nominate as parents for the school council at that school.

Once the nomination form is completed, return it to the principal within the time stated on the notice of election. You will receive a Nomination Form Receipt in the mail following the receipt of your completed nomination.

Generally, if there are more nominations received than there are vacancies on council, a ballot will be conducted in the two weeks after the call for nominations has closed.

Remember

- Ask at the school for help if you would like to stand for election and are not sure what to do.
- Consider standing for election to council this year.
- Be sure to vote in the elections.
- Contact the principal for further information.