



PARKSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL
GOVERNING COUNCIL

Members Guide to Roles and Responsibilities

Revised March 2013

Introduction

Welcome to the Parkside Primary School Governing Council and thank you for volunteering your time to assist in the governance of your child's school. By doing so, you have the opportunity to be involved in the school at a level which extends beyond the interests of your own children. Your involvement in Governing Council will improve your understanding of the educational and resource issues and pressures that affect the way our school functions.

Coming onto Governing Council can be daunting for those who have limited experience of what the Council does and how its meetings are run. It can take time before people feel confident enough to speak up and put their opinions. There are also issues and terminology which be unfamiliar if you who have not been involved with Governing Councils before.

This document has been put together to help you understand your role and responsibilities as a member of the Governing Council. It contains a brief synopsis of the Constitution and a guide to the roles of the various sub-committees.

Following your election to Governing Council you will be provided with a copy of the following documents:

- *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Members Guide to Roles and Responsibilities* (this document)
- *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Constitution.*
- *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Statement of the Functions and Role of Governing Council*
- *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Code of Practice*
- *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Standing Orders*
- *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Committees Sub-Committees and Role Statements*
- the current Site Learning Plan
- the Parkside Primary School Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Values Statement
- a calendar of meeting dates for the current year
- a contact list for all members of Governing Council.

If you have questions after reading this, please don't hesitate to contact the Principal or the Chairperson of Governing Council.

1 Object of the Governing Council

The object of the Governing Council is to involve the school community in the governance of the school and to strengthen and support public education in the community.

2 Role of the Governing Council

The role of the Governing Council is directed by the Constitution and the Governing Council Code of Practice.

As a member of the Governing Council, you need to be aware that our governance role has the following features:

- Emphasis on the cooperative role of Governing Council and school staff
- Separation of management and governance
- Focus on improving student learning outcomes
- Setting and monitoring of broad direction for the school
- Principal and staff responsibility for reporting
- Minimisation of joint areas of accountability.

Our responsibility is to identify, and incorporate where possible, student, parent and community input and values into the broad direction of the school – the Principal and staff representative brings the staff perspective to these undertakings.

3 Functions of the Governing Council

The main functions of Governing Council are to:

- involve the school community in the governance of the school by providing a forum for the involvement of parents and the school community
- ascertain the educational needs of the local community and the attitudes to educational developments within the school
- ensure that the cultural and social diversity of the community is considered and particular needs are appropriately identified.
- set the broad direction and vision of the school
- strategic planning for the school
- determine policies for the school including policies for the safety, welfare and discipline of students
- determine the application of financial resources including regular review of the budget
- monitor and review the Site Learning Plan
- report to the school community and the Minister on the Strategic Plan, finances of the school and the Council's operations
- oversee fundraising for school related purposes.

More information can be found in the document *Parkside Governing Council Statement of the Functions and Role of Governing Council*.

4 Code of Practice

The Education Act requires that Governing Council comply with a Code of Practice approved by the Minister. Accepting a place on the Governing Council means undertaking a duty of trust and loyalty to act honestly, in good faith, consider the needs of every child and student, and act in the best interests of the school. More information can be found in the document *Parkside Governing Council Code of Practice*.

5 The Constitution

The role and powers of the Governing Council are set out in the *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Constitution*. The Constitution is based on a standard document provided by DECD which is adapted and endorsed by Governing Council and then approved by the Department under section 83 of the *Education Act 1972*.

The Constitution sets out the functions and powers of the Council, the role of the Principal, office holders and Executive Committee, and provides guidelines for membership, term of office, meetings, elections, committees, and financial matters. You may wish to take the opportunity to become familiar with the content of the Constitution, and keep your copy where you can refer to it if and when necessary. Our Constitution was most recently reviewed in November 2012.

6 Standing Orders

This document details how Governing Council meetings will be conducted. It covers procedural matters such as attendance, provision of meeting papers, taking of minutes and the conduct of Councillors at meetings. Unlike the Constitution and the Code of Practice this document does not require DECD or Ministerial approval and may be amended by the Governing Council as required. More information can be found in the document *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Standing Orders*.

7 Membership of the Governing Council

7.1 Powers of the Governing Council

These are set out in Section 4 of the Constitution but briefly Governing Council can:

- employ people (other than teachers) e.g. canteen manager
- enter into contracts
- undertake construction or improvements for the benefit of the school
- run facilities and services to enhance education, development, care, safety and health of children and students.

7.2 Membership

Membership of the Governing Council is set out in the Constitution – currently the Governing Council must comprise 12 councillors. The Principal is an automatic member by virtue of their office (i.e. ex officio). There must be one member of staff elected at a general staff meeting, and 10 elected parents of the school. The Minister must approve any amendment to the Constitution to change membership numbers.

7.3 Term of Office

Elected members will be elected for a term of 2 years. A Councillor elected by staff will hold office for one year. Upon expiry of the term of office, each Councillor will remain incumbent until the position is declared vacant at the AGM. Councillors are eligible for subsequent re-election, re-nomination or re-appointment.

7.4 Liability

Councillors are protected from personal liability through the immunity provided to those who act in good faith in exercising the powers and functions of a Council. This means complying with the Code of Practice. You will be provided with a copy of this document, and it is important that you familiarise yourself with it, along with the Standing Orders which cover procedural matters in regard to meetings.

You will also be required to sign a statement to declare that you are not an undischarged bankrupt and that you have not been convicted of any prescribed offence.

7.5 Office Holders and Executive Committee

The office holders are the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer who are elected by the Council within one month of the AGM. Neither the Chairperson nor the Treasurer may be a member of the staff of the school.

The Council may appoint an Executive Committee which will comprise the office holders and the Principal. This Committee will meet to carry out business delegated or referred by the Council and report to subsequent Council meetings. This group will also meet a week before each Council meeting to set the agenda and ensure all papers are prepared.

7.5.1 The Chairperson:

- calls and presides at meetings of the Council and Executive Committee
- in consultation with the Principal and the Secretary, prepares the agenda for Council meetings
- facilitates full and balanced participation in meetings by all councillors
- decides on the manner in which meetings are conducted and matters of order
- reports to the AGM
- acts as spokesperson on behalf of the Council, but only commenting on Council matters
- in the Chairperson's absence, the Deputy Chairperson must undertake the role of the Chairperson. In the absence of the Chair and Deputy Chair, a Councillor elected by the Council must preside.

7.5.2 The Secretary:

- ensures that notices of meetings are given in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution
- is responsible for the maintenance and safekeeping of the Constitution and the Code of Practice of the Council, the Common Seal, minutes of meetings, correspondence file, register of Councillors, records of submissions or reports made by Council, any contracts or agreements made by the Council, and Council policies
- ensures that a copy of the meeting agenda and minutes of the previous meeting are forwarded to each Councillor prior to each meeting
- records the minutes at meetings
- conducts the official correspondence of the Council
- ensure copies of the Constitution and the Code of Practice are available for public inspection
- at the beginning of the year distribute a calendar of meetings to all Councillors and sub-committees, and compile and distribute a contact list for all members of Council.

7.5.3 The Treasurer:

- chairs the Finance Advisory Committee
- ensures that the Council's financial budgets and statements are prepared
- submits a report of those finances to each Council meeting
- presents the Council's audited accounts to the AGM.

7.5.4 The Principal:

- is answerable to the Chief Executive for providing educational leadership in the school
- implements the Site Learning Plan and school policies
- provides reports, information and advice relevant to the school's educational policy and the Council's functions
- is responsible for staff development and human resource management
- is the returning officer for election, nomination and appointment of councillors
- chairs the initial meeting of the new Council and supervises nominations, appointments and elections
- is an automatic member of Council with full voting rights
- contributes to formulation of the agenda.

7.6 Vacancies

Your membership will cease if:

- you die!
- you do not re-nominate at the completion of your term
- you resign in writing
- you are removed by the Minister
- you are declared bankrupt
- you have been convicted of a prescribed offence
- you miss three consecutive Council meetings without leave of absence.

The Council may appoint a person to temporarily fill a casual vacancy in its membership until a new councillor can be elected.

8 Governing Council Meetings

Governing Council must meet at least twice in each school term. Currently Council meets twice in terms 1 and 2, and three times in terms 3 and 4 in order to meet the work load. If a meeting needs to be cancelled, another will be scheduled as soon as possible to ensure this requirement is met. Notice of the next meeting is given at the previous meeting, or by at least 7 days written notice. A calendar of meeting dates for the year will be given to all members.

8.1 Quorum

A quorum is the fixed minimum number of Council members who must be present to make the proceedings valid. A quorum at a meeting of the Governing Council is a simple majority (half plus one) of the filled positions on the Council (currently 7). If after 30 minutes from the meeting start time a quorum is not present, the meeting must adjourn.

8.2 Voting

Except in the case of a special resolution, a decision of the majority of those councillors present and eligible to vote is the decision of the Council.

The Chairperson must have a deliberative vote only. In the event of tied votes, the Chairperson does not have a second or casting vote and the motion must be taken to be defeated.

Voting must be by show of hands or in the case of a conference by telephone or electronic means by voice or in writing.

Councillors do not have a right to appoint a proxy to attend Governing Council meetings. With the agreement of the Governing Council an observer can attend the meeting, but does not have voting rights.

However, a secret ballot must be conducted for:

- A contested election; or
- A special resolution to remove an office holder from office.

8.3 General Meetings

A general meeting must be held at least once annually (the AGM) to present reports and elect parents to the Council. All persons within the school community are eligible to attend general meetings and vote on any matters proposed for resolution.

8.4 Extraordinary Council Meetings

The Chairperson must call an extraordinary meeting of the Council by written request from at least three Councillors. The business of the meeting must be confined to the object for which it is convened.

More information can be found in the document *Parkside Primary School Governing Council Standing Orders*.

9 Committees of Governing Council

There are 2 types of committees currently supporting the Parkside Primary School Governing Council:

- 2 mandated committees
- 5 sub-committees

9.1 Mandated Committees

Finance Administration Committee

Establishment of a Finance Administration Committee is required by the Constitution to advise the Governing Council on budgetary and financial matters, including preparation of the preliminary budget. Membership of the committee must include the Principal and Treasurer.

Canteen Management Committee

The DECD Administrative Instruction and Guidelines require that a Canteen Management Committee must be established where a school operates a canteen. The composition of the committee is at the discretion of the council, but it should include the Principal or his / her nominee, together with the Canteen Supervisor.

9.2 Sub-Committees

In addition to the mandated committees, the Constitution provides that the Governing Council may establish a range of other committees to undertake some of the workload of Governing Council, and give a wider group of people the opportunity to be involved in management and promotion of the school. The Governing Council must specify the terms of reference (role statement) for its sub-committees.

Each sub-committee must consist of at least three people, and at least one member of those must be a member or nominee of the Governing Council. That person may or may not chair the committee. An office bearer on the Governing Council is not permitted to chair a committee.

The Governing Council nominee will be responsible for ensuring that the sub-committee reports to Council as required and that Council referrals are passed onto the committee.

Each committee will be provided with the Governing Council calendar of meetings to assist them in timetabling their meetings and projects.

Funding of Sub-Committees

- sub-committees have no budgetary allocation
- proposals for activities requiring an outlay of funds will require approval from Governing Council
- profits generated by activities must be documented and money submitted to the school finance officer
- should a sub-committee wish to fundraise for a specific purpose approval will need to be sought from Governing Council.

Consent for activities

Activities organised by sub-committees which involve participation by students will require consent to be obtained from parents or care-givers.

Current Sub-Committees of Governing Council

- Education
- Facilities and Grounds
- Fundraising

- Parents and Friends
- Sport
- Sustainability

Further detail on Governing Council Committees and the Role Statements for sub-committees are provided in the document *Sub-Committees and Role Statements*.