



Key functions of School Council

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.

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 particular positions. 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.

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.