

How Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School Council Works

Matraville Soldiers' Settlement School Council Constitution

Role of the School Council

Generally, the School Council lets parents and community members have a say in how Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School is run. It is one of a number of consultative groups that build closer links between the school's teachers and staff, students, parents and members of the community.

The three main consultative groups are:

1. Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Parents Association (P&C) – which is our local P & C. The School Council works closely with P&C.
2. The Student Representative Council -which gives a voice to students from all classes throughout the school about how the school is run, and
3. The School Council – which is made up of the Principal, teachers, staff, parents and community members

Why would I want to be on the School Council?

Being a member of the School Council is a good way for you to express your opinion, or that of a group you represent, on important school matters. You will also have regular opportunities to advise the principal about matters that affect the school. You will learn a great deal more about the school as a member of the School Council and you will help to make the school an even better place. If you are a parent of children at the school your own children will also benefit. You will be showing them that you care about their education and that you wish to work for their school.

Who can be a School Councillor?

The only qualification you need is a willingness to help the school. You must also be a parent or legal guardian with a child at the school (parent representative), a member of the local community (resident or business) or a staff member at the school.

A staff member from Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School cannot be a parent member or a community member. They can however be a staff representative, if elected.

Only one person who works at another school can be a parent member. A person who is a member of a School Council at another school cannot be a member of the Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School Council unless approved by the relevant Director of Schools.

What does the School Council do?

The School Council operates under the law, policies, and priorities of the Department of Education and the Government. This means we can help with the following:

1. Reviewing school finances – based on reports from the Principal
2. Formulating broad policies and management plans for the school – as requested
3. Deciding on educational needs – as requested and within the limits of policy
4. Strategies for working with the community – promoting a positive image
5. Monitoring welfare and disciplinary policies.
6. Profiling and selecting a new Principal when the job becomes vacant.
7. Ratifying policies for community use of school facilities
8. Deciding on how well the school tells parents about their child's achievements
9. Providing an annual report to the school community on School Council activities
10. Promoting involvement in school activities by school and community members
11. Any other matter affecting the school community

What the School Council does not do

The School Council cannot:

1. Employ staff – the Principal can (although the School Council helps choose the Principal).
2. Alter approved curricula, class sizes, or teacher numbers.
3. cannot hire or fire teachers or other members of the school staff – the Principal can
4. Is not responsible for managing the school – the Principal is.
5. Is not responsible for choosing the teaching and learning programs taught in the school. The Principal and teachers are responsible for these programs.
6. Is not responsible for the school uniform – the Uniform Committee of P&C does this.
7. Does not raise money for the school – P&C, teachers and the SRC do this.
8. Cannot direct how money is spent on behalf of the school, either by the Principal or P&C (it does help determine the broad budget plan).

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Members of the School Council are protected from all legal liability resulting from their duties on the School Council.

Relationship with other representative groups and the Principal

The School Council liaises with P&C and other representative groups to enhance their effectiveness and increase parent and community representation. It aims to enhance the effectiveness of these groups and not to compete with or supplant them.

In particular, the School Council, P&C, and the Principal are reliant on each other to meet the schools needs and ensure accountability. For example, P&Cs solely responsible for the Functions and Fundraising Committee and the Uniform Committee. The School Council has no say in these. P&C members are elected to the Canteen Committee. This Committee is accountable to the School Council. The Principal reports on Finances to the School Council, but not to P&C.

How is the School Council responsible?

The School Council answers to the Senior Education Director [SED] Botany District.

The Principal is accountable to the Director-General for Education and Training for the total management of the school. This includes implementing the broad policies and priorities determined by the School Council.

Elected Councillors must provide a written report of School Council proceedings to the school community each school term. This report appears in the school newsletter. [The Principal will ensure the report is provided]

Elected Councillors are also accountable to their constituency and can be removed by them after a special meeting held for this purposes passes a recommendation to do so.

P&C's responsibilities on the School Council

The School Council and P&C are two separate bodies in a complementary relationship.

P&C must nominate one parent representatives to the School Council. Normally this is the President of P&C who is automatically appointed to the School Council. If the President of P&C declines this appointment P&C must nominate a replacement member.

P&C must ensure that parent representatives attend both P&C meetings and School Council meetings regularly. The P&C representative on the School Council must provide a report of each School Council meeting to the next P&C meeting.

P&C has a responsibility to ensure that the School Council parent representatives reflect the majority view of the P&C members when attending School Council meetings.

Who is responsible for school finances?

The Principal is accountable for managing the school finances. This includes, when requested, negotiating contracts on behalf of the School Council.

Neither the Principal nor the School Council have a say over how P&C spends the money it raises. Only members of P&C can decide how it spends funds raised for the school. P&C, the Principal, and School Council work together to ensure there is agreement about what needs are funded by P&C.

The School Council helps determine the schools annual budget plan.

What is the budget plan?

The budget plan is an outline of anticipated income and expenses for the school year. The School Council determined the budget plan based on advice from the Principal about funds available, educational needs of the school, priorities, and policies of the Department of Education

All school community members will be given an opportunity to express their view about the educational and resources needs and priorities of the school. The School Council will consider all views expressed before the budget plan is determined.

Who is responsible for the canteen's operation?

Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School has a separate Canteen Committee made up of P&C members, School Council Members and Canteen Staff. This Committee is accountable to the School Council. The Canteen Committee also gives reports to P&C and discusses issues of concern with P&C members.

A private contractor runs the canteen at Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School. The contractor liaises with the Canteen Committee to make sure it operates in accordance with the wishes of the school

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community, as determined by the Canteen Committee and School Council.

The Canteen Committee undertakes reviews of canteen policies and practices. It can make recommendations for changes to these, as well as to the canteen menu. Minor changes can be approved by the Canteen Committee without referral to the School Council. However, the School Council must ratify substantial or controversial changes, including significant price increases to menu items.

The School Council also assists in the letting of tenders for the school canteen. The Principal negotiates the tender with the contractor.

Who are the members of the School Council?

The majority of the School Council must be made up of parent and community representatives. No one group, for example community representatives or teachers, can have the numbers to outvote the rest of the School Council.

Our School Council is made up of:

The Principal as Executive Member – automatically appointed

The President of P&C (or an alternative) – automatically appointed

One other (1) elected parent representative

One (1) elected staff representatives [who must be a teacher]

One (1) appointed local community representative

One [1] appointed ATSI community representative

The total number of Councillors is six (6).

The Senior Education Director Botany District can rectify an imbalance in representation by adjusting the number of members.

Co-opted members

School Council may co-opt other members to assist for a specific purpose and period. These positions are advisory and do not have a decision making role.

Term of office

Elected and community members are appointed for two years. The term of office starts after the annual general meeting, usually held in April each year.

Every two years there will be fresh elections. At this time all temporary/casual positions (see below) and positions of two years standing are vacated.

Elected and community members cannot hold office for more than two consecutive terms (4 years).

Elected members may vacate office with due notice to the School Council. If they cease to be a parent of a child at the school or a staff member they automatically cease to be a member.

Automatically appointed members cease to be Councillors when they vacate their substantive position.

Nomination and election of Councillors

Elections for staff and parent representatives will take place within thirty (30) days of the P&C Annual General Meeting, usually held in March each year.

A call for nominations will be advertised in two (2) consecutive school bulletins so that all school staff and parents have the opportunity to nominate their particular representatives.

Nominations must be:

1. submitted in writing on the form provided.
2. By the advertised closing date.
3. proposed and seconded by members of the constituency the nominee represents.
4. Signed by the nominee indicating they accept the nomination.

***Note the Principal may contact each nominee to clarify roles and responsibilities of School Council members before proceeding to election.*

If more than the required number of members is nominated the Principal will arrange an election. Otherwise, those nominated will be appointed to vacant positions.

If an election is required, the principal will send ballot papers to all eligible voters before elections take place. To ensure equity there will be one vote per current residential address of parent/carer/legal guardian held on the school records.

All school staff is entitled to vote for their representative.

Any election for parent representatives will take place by postal vote within fourteen (14) days of the closing date for nominations, on a day declared by the School Council.

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The school staff representative will be elected at general staff meetings as vacancies arise.

Votes will be counted by the returning officers. The returning officers are the Principal and the President of P&C or their nominees.

Election results will be published in writing within thirty (30) days of the election, in two consecutive school bulletins, and on staff notice boards.

Community members

In consultation with the Principal and President of P&C, and on approval of the Senior Education Director [SED], Botany District, the Assistant Director General of Education (Sydney Region) will appoint community members. These members may be drawn from any facet of the local community. We look for community members who can add value to the school community because of their knowledge, experience, and/or commitment.

Community member can only be removed after a special meeting has been held for this purpose and a recommendation is passed and approved by the Assistant Director General of Education (Sydney Region) through the Senior Education Director [SED] Botany District.

Temporary/casual positions

From time to time, members leave the School Council during the year. There are two options for filling these vacancies:

1. Hold elections, or
2. Appoint on a priority basis from a list of nominees not elected on a first past the post basis following the last election held.

The School Council will determine which option to use.

These temporary/casual positions will be vacated at the holding of annual elections (around March/April each year).

School Council office bearers

The School Council will elect a **President** and **Secretary** at the first meeting of the new constitution, or as a vacancy arises. Only community members or elected parent members can be appointed to these positions.

The principal is automatically the **Executive Member** and performs the functions of **Treasurer**, if required.

What does the President do?

- Chairs School Council meetings
- In consultation with the Principal, prepares the Agenda for each meeting and organizes meetings
- Assists in preparation of any School Councils documents for public distribution
- Performs various official duties as determined by the School Council

What does the Secretary do?

- Prepares, circulates and organizes display of the minutes of the meetings
- Receives and sends correspondence
- Performs other duties as determined by the School Council

What does the Principal do as Executive Member?

- Advises the School Council on educational matters
- Implements the broad policies and priorities as determined by the School Council
- Negotiates contracts on behalf of the School Council
- With the President, sets the meeting agenda
- With the President, prepares the Annual report and meetings, including the AGM
- Prepares financial reports of the School Council
- Organises election of School Council members and the transition from one School Council to the next
- Maintains official School Council records
- Performs other duties as determined by the School Council

School Council meetings

There are three types of School Council meetings, regular, special and the Annual General meeting (AGM). These are all explained below.

Regular meetings

The School Council will have at least one (1) regular meeting per school term. The first meeting will be held within one month of the election of office bearers. The School Council decides the dates, venue, and time of these regular meetings. These details will be advertised in school bulletins and on notice boards.

Quorum for regular meetings

A quorum for a regular the School Council is four (4) members. If there is no quorum, matters can be

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discussed but no decision taken. If there is no quorum the meeting can decide when and where the next meeting is held.

Attending meetings

Councillors are to attend all meetings (not just regular ones).

Advance notice must be given to another Councillor if a Councillor cannot attend a meeting.

If an elected or appointed Councillor fails to attend two meetings in a row without advance notice, they can be asked to show cause why they should not be dismissed from School Council.

If School Council decides to dismiss an elected or appointed School Council after they have been asked to show cause, the position will be declared vacant and a new appointment made in the usual way.

Agendas

The President and Principal determine the agenda for regular meetings and the AGM. Special meetings have a limited agenda, explained below.

Councillors can ask for items to be placed on the agenda. The agenda will be sent out seven (7) days before the next meeting. Councillors can raise issues for discussion at a meeting under "other business". Items raised under other business may need to be postponed if more preparation is needed for Councillors to consider the matter.

Minutes

The Secretary prepares, circulates, and arranges the display of minutes. All Councillors receive a copy of the minutes prior to the meeting.

Minutes are publicly available documents and anyone has the right to see them, given reasonable notice. The only exception will be matters which the School Council agrees must be in confidence in order to protect the personal or commercial interests of a student or other person.

Meeting procedures

Informal meeting procedures operate at Matraville Soldiers' Settlement School Council. We operate on a consensus basis without rigid rules for timing of speakers, moving of motions or voting. This means we all try to agree on decisions the School Council makes. We respect the right of all Councillors and invited participants to have a say about matters within

the jurisdiction of the School Council. All decisions are recorded in the minutes. Councillors are free to debate issues, within reason.

A Councillor who does not agree with a decision recorded can ask for their dissenting view to be recorded in the minutes.

If the need arises because of the size of the AGM or a special meeting or because the consensus approach is not working, the School Council can resolve to adopt formal meeting procedures for the duration of that meeting. In doing so the *Handbook for Chairmen and Secretaries* by CF Bentley will be our guide.

Annual General Meeting

An AGM will be held within thirty (30) days of the P&C AGM (usually in May each year). Fourteen (14) days notice of the AGM will be sent to the school community. Quorum for an AGM is six (6). Reports of the School Council activities will be presented at the AGM.

Special meetings

Can be called at any time during a school term by:

- A simple majority of School Council
- Representatives of 20% of families with students at the school in writing to the President and Executive Member
- The Principal in writing
- A simple majority of school staff in writing

Special meetings can be called to:

- Recommend amendments to the constitution
- Recommend the approval of an appointed member (this can also be done at a regular meeting)
- Dissenting from a School Council decision
- Recommend dismissal of the present School Council
- Obtain the views of as many people as possible

Special meetings must be held within fourteen days (14) of the request. A notice of motion explaining the purpose of the special meeting will be circulated to the school community seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

Quorums for special meetings

- If to obtain the views of as many people as possible, the quorum is twenty (20).

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- If to amend the constitution, eight Councillors, and at least 5% of families with students at school.
- If to dismiss the School Council, then at least 30% of families with students at the school

Procedures at special meetings

Consensus rules do not apply to special meetings owing to the number of people present and the emotive and difficult issues that can be discussed. So, formal meeting procedures apply.

The President will chair the meetings unless, in the interests of objectivity, the School Council agrees someone else should do so.

A motion needs to be carried by two-thirds majority of eligible voters present.

Only matters on the advertised agenda can be discussed at a special meeting

A decision to act on any recommendation from a special meeting held to obtain the views of as many people as possible is the responsibility of the School Council.

Recommendations to amend the constitution, remove appointed members, dismiss the School Council, or dissent from a School Council decision will be sent to the Assistant Director General of Education (Sydney Region) for approval.

Removal of members

To remove an elected Councillor, the group they represent must call a Special Meeting for that purpose and elect a replacement.

An appointed community member can be removed by the Senior Education Director, Botany District. This can only happen after a special meeting for this purpose or the School Council resolves to dismiss the member because they have failed to attend two consecutive meetings without approval and have not shown sufficient cause for doing so.

Automatically appointed members cannot be removed but cease to be Councillors when they vacate their substantive position.

Dismissal of the School Council

The School Council may be dismissed after a resolution is passed at a special meeting held for this purpose and on the approval of the Senior Education Director [SED] Botany District.

If the School Council is dismissed elections will be held to form a new School Council. Dismissed Councillors are eligible to be re-elected.

School Council records

The School Council records including copies of the Constitution and all Agenda minutes, correspondence, files, financial reports and committee reports will be kept by the Executive Member within the school unless authorized by the President and Executive Member.

Amendments to the constitution

The constitution can only be amended at a special meeting called for that purpose. All proposed amendments will be submitted to the Senior Education Director, Bondi District for approval.

If, after two attempts are made to hold a special meeting to amend the constitution but a quorum is not obtained, the President and Executive Member may write to the Senior Education Director [SED], Bondi District for approval to amend the constitution.

Resolution of disputes

Where a dispute cannot be resolved through regular School Council procedures or at a special meeting, Senior Education Director, Bondi District will resolve the matter

Definition of terms

Where there is any dispute about the terms used in this document they will be defined by referring to the Department of Education's model school constitution and related policies.

Feedback about the School Council

The School Council values feedback about how well it operates. Feedback can be given to any School Councillor at any time. Where a complaint is received about the School Council, the School Council will discuss it and attempt to give an appropriate written response.

Concerns about improper conduct by the School Council can be referred to the Senior Education Director, Botany District.