The following document is meant to be a living document that:

- Helps define the processes that School Council operates by,
- Allows for inclusion of knowledge and processes as learned,
- Provides certainty for all parties in an environment where frequent changes of people are occurring.

Introduction

Mirboo North Primary School’s motto is “Working Together”. The School Council has worked to answer the question of what we are working together to achieve. The work in determining a Mission Statement is not cast in stone and can be changed by School Council any time School Council sees fit, however the “Mission” does confer certain rights and obligations. These require more definition within the guidance of the “Mission Statement”, however specific behaviours at School Councillor level can be drawn out of the basic message contained within the “Mission”.

Mission Statement

“Working Together with parents and the broader Community to provide opportunities to develop caring, confident and capable children who have positive attitudes towards themselves, learning and life.”

School Councillor Behaviours

The attitude in which School Council activities should be conducted is therefore by “working together”. This leads to conclusions about behaviours that are appropriate and acceptable.

1. Valuing of “team members” by being respectful and valuing differences. This is not a commitment to agreement, on the contrary, team members must feel free and supported enough to disagree knowing there are no consequences associated with having a difference of opinion.

2. Like all teams there must be some team rules including no public slanging or public dissension, even though debate is to be encouraged within School Council meetings.

3. Recognising different team member skills and providing an opportunity for development of individuals to provide greater value to the team and the cause.

The relationship between parent representatives and the Principal (in particular) could be a source of conflict unless clear lines of understanding of each other’s roles are developed. In general, the Principal is accountable to deliver results in accordance with the expectations laid down by School Council through documents such as the School Charter. It is most inadvisable for School Councillors to act in a manner that abrogates this basic accountability that the Principal has to the broader school community.
School Council Structure
The structure of School Council comprises compulsory representation from 3 distinct groups and provision for an additional Community based representative nominated by School Council. The groups having compulsory representation by number of positions are,
1. Elected parents - 9
2. Elected DE&T members 5 (including the Principal),
3. Community Members - 1

Elected representatives are ordinarily elected for a term of two years with 50% of positions being subject to election each year. The DE&T have strict rules on eligibility of parent representatives having children at the school and not being direct DE&T employees.

Quorum
Quorum requirements for meetings to proceed are:
Not less than half of the total membership of the Council provided that there is a majority of members present who are not DE&T Employees.

Executive
The executive positions within School Council are:
• Principal (appointed on a 5 year DE&T Contract by School Council),
• President (must be a parent representative),
• Secretary (often a DE&T representative as the Minutes are typed and distributed from school),
• Treasurer (often convenes Finance Sub-Committee).

The Executive or members of the Executive may be charged with making final decisions where it is impractical for the entire School Council to make decisions at short notice. Where or when this happens the person(s) making the decision(s) are bound to inform the entire School Council of such decisions at the next full Council meeting.

There may be benefit for the Executive to meet annually to review procedural matters including reviewing these standing orders and developing proposals for School Council consideration. However the Executive has no defined powers other than those that School Council chooses to give it.

The traditional structure of School Council at Mirboo North operates at two levels.
1. Full monthly School Council meetings at which decisions are made.
2. Through School Council Sub-Committees which have the power to investigate and make recommendations to School Council.

School Council Sub-committees
The 4 long standing sub-committees at Mirboo North Primary School are :
1. Education,
2. Finance,
3. Grounds and Facilities, and
4. Communications,

The positions of sub-committee convenors are generally filled at the same time as Executive positions and the Principal is ineligible to act as a sub-committee convenor.
School Council Meetings
School Council meetings have traditionally been held on the second Monday of each month, or at other mutually agreed times. Attempts are made to run meetings efficiently, maximising opportunities for debate and minimising time spent on routine activities. Several general rules are observed to achieve these objectives:

1. Agenda items, correspondence and reports to be submitted at least four days prior to School Council Meetings to allow all participants the opportunity to read prior to the meeting. All Agenda items must be handed to the School Council President or School Principal at least four days prior to School Council Meetings unless the issue has arisen after that time.

2. Only those items on the Agenda will be dealt with at School Council Meetings. (subject to conditions in item 1)

3. When dealing with issues where written correspondence and reports have been submitted prior to the meeting these issues are covered by exception during the meeting (ie clarifications, interpretations and questions are allowed but reading of reports should generally be discouraged).

4. School Council meetings will last a maximum of two hours from the start of the meeting. A motion may be passed to extend the meeting if required to deal with the matter at hand. Any outstanding agenda items to be dealt with at the next meeting.

5. From time to time sensitive issues may arise where, at the discretion of the President, parts of the Council meeting may be held in camera to allow full and open discussion to take place.

Confidentiality
From time to time, issues will arise where School Councillors will become privy to information that should not be discussed outside of school council meetings. To do so may be cause for legal action by third parties in the case of tender evaluations, personnel selection or other sensitive issues. In such cases it is worth such restrictions being openly discussed prior to dissemination of information allowing anyone who cannot abide by the requirements to leave and not incur potential liability.

Strategic Plan
The School Strategic Plan is a special document that outlines the “vision” and measures, stating what the school is attempting to achieve over the coming period. It is the yardstick by which the school will be measured. It will be developed in consultation with the broader school community but is the basic document for which School Council is accountable. It should therefore receive the greatest effort from School Council to ensure the school is heading where the broader school community wants. School Council is also accountable to ensure adequate resources are available within the school to achieve goals (resources are defined as money, people and facilities). As stated earlier it is the Principal who is accountable for delivery of results.
At Mirboo North Primary School a system of quarterly reports have been devised to track progress of school activities.

Annual Reports
The annual report is to be prepared for the Annual Meeting held late March - early April each year to report progress, issues and achievements to the broader school community and announce the result of the annual round of School Council elections. It has been tradition at Mirboo North to follow this meeting with a brief meeting of School Councillors to elect Office Bearers and Sub-Committee Leaders.
Budgets
The preliminary budget is to be submitted for School Council approval at the November School Council meeting. The final budget will be ratified at the first School Council meeting once the budget is confirmed after census day.

Although provision of Department of Education (DE&T) budget details are often late arriving they only provide information on the State provided income to the School and are often at least foreshadowed in advance. The challenge for School Council, the Staff and Management of the School is to determine needs in advance. It is strongly recommended that the School Community attempt to adopt a policy of no surprises with regard to determining budget needs. This is largely possible using the following sources:

- The School Strategic Plan for direction to allow budgeting of curriculum needs,
- The Asset Management Plan for projecting replacements for existing School assets (being developed),
- The Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Plan (yet to be developed)

In general these sources should be updated during term 3 and completed no later than the end of term 3 in readiness for the budget process to commence at the start of term 4.

The budget to be cast by School Council must take account of all other issues.

Income streams are largely from 4 sources (identified below) of which voluntary school fees are the only item under the direct control of School Council:

- Government provided funds,
- Parents Club fund raising activities (although in recent times School Council has attempted to concentrate these funds on purchases of assets that can be readily acknowledged and stand in perpetuity),
- Investments and donations,
- Books and Requisites Fees and
- Voluntary School Contributions (the level of which are struck by School Council).

Communication Processes
School Council is frequently required to make policy decisions relating to issues affecting the greater School Community. For parent representatives on School Council to be able to adequately represent the interests of a majority of parents various mechanisms have been devised. The most frequently used process entails using a group of randomly selected parents known as the Parents Reference Group. This group is selected each year and used for various surveys, including to meet Department of Education requirements to survey parent satisfaction.