**RESPONSIBILITIES OF FORMAL PARENT GROUPS**

**EXECUTIVE POSITIONS**

Everyone who is a member of a formal parent committee or group is a ‘parent leader’.

This said, parent leaders who hold executivepositions of responsibility within formal SA Catholic school parent groups – like president, vice president, treasurer and secretary - have a heightened responsibility to:

* Act as role models within the school community by reflecting the values and ethos of the school.
* Work constructively with the principal, staff and the wider school community.
* Build and nurture a sense of community.

[*Charter for Parents in Catholic Schools SA*](http://www.parentfederation.catholic.edu.au/__files/f/1565/Charter%20for%20Parents.pdf)

This information brief covers the responsibilities of the:

* President/Chair.
* Vice President/Vice Chair.
* Secretary.
* Treasurer.

**PRESIDENT or CHAIR**

Presidents/chairs ‘set the tone’ for the work and success of a formal parent group, and the quality of its relationship with parents, the school leadership team and others in the school community. They need to:

* Be visible within the school and accessible to parents and the school leadership team.
* Promote and model constructive parent participation in the school.

In the context of group meetings, they need to:

* Ensure meetings are properly convened in accordance with applicable rules or guidelines.
* In collaboration with the Secretary, prepare and distribute agendas prior to meetings.
* In collaboration with the Secretary, attend to incoming/outgoing correspondence (before and between meetings) and, for transparency, distribute important correspondence to the group.
* Ensure meetings begin and end on time and the agenda is adhered to, pointing out any changes to the circulated agenda at the start of a meeting.
* If applicable rules require a quorum to be present for a formal meeting to proceed, confirm this requirement has or has not been met.

[If a quorum is required but not present, seek consensus with those present as to whether the meeting should proceed. If the answer is yes, then agenda items can be discussed, action plans can be progressed, and formal resolutions can be crafted (e.g. motions to move the minutes and finance report). However, formal resolutions cannot be passed, and draft meeting notes rather than minutes are prepared.]

* Sign the minutes of the previous meeting once they have been formally accepted as a true and correct record of that meeting.
* Go through ‘business arising’ from the previous meeting (Were agreed actions completed? What progress has been made? What actions, if any, need to be followed up? Do members have questions about these?).

Work hard to ensure members keep to the point in discussions/debates and are always polite and attentive (e.g. actively listen and ask questions to clarify understanding, don’t get personal, don’t blame). At the same time, allow some space for people’s imagination to flow.

Make sure speakers are not unfairly interrupted and private conversations among members don’t take place or are very, very limited. Maintain regular eye contact (‘rove the room’) with all members so they feel included and can easily signal when they want to speak.

Be alert to negative body language and address this by politely toning people down or giving a general reminder about listening and speaking respectfully.

‘Park’ items that come up but aren’t on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting (if there is time) and/or agenda them for the next meeting as needs be.

Make sure, particularly on contentious matters, that as many opinions as possible are expressed and call for a vote if consensus can’t be reached.

Make clear the procedure for voting. If this is not stated in applicable rules/guidelines, lead the group to decide a procedure and formally adopt this for all meetings.

* Make a timely judgement as to whether a meeting is likely to go over time. Ask members if they will agree to add some extra time to the meeting and, if so, how much. Adhere to the extra time allocation.
* Before closing the meeting, summarise the main issues and items/actions that have been decided. Confirm who has agreed to be responsible or ask for volunteers to share the workload. Ensure item/action ‘owners’ are noted in the minutes.
* Work with the secretary to prepare and distribute draft meeting minutes/notes as soon as possible.

If this is difficult, make sure an items/actions list with ‘owners’ and timeframes is sent to members within one week. This will prompt people’s memory and most likely increase their sense of responsibility and commitment to good time management.

* Collaboratively develop communication strategies to inform and inspire the school’s wider parent community to appreciate the group’s role and contribute to this – as members or through other, more irregular forms of volunteering.
* In collaboration with the Treasurer and relevant school staff, develop the group’s literacy in budgeting and financial management and reporting.
* Build in time to reflect on the group’s purpose, processes, activities and outcomes, either in regular meetings or in separately scheduled planning/evaluation meetings.

Note:

Some groups choose to have Co-Presidents/Co-Chairs instead of Vice Presidents/Vice Chairs. This model can work very well for a group whose members are very busy and have multiple things to attend to and participate in. The key things in making Co-President/Co-Chair arrangements work are a) great communication and b) a genuine willingness to ‘share power’ and to not intentionally or unintentionally compete with each other or talk each other down.

**VICE PRESIDENT or VICE CHAIR**

The responsibilities of this position can be more fluid than that of the President/Chair, meaning there is considerable scope to nut out and negotiate what the person will do to support the President/Chair and the work of the group.

Often, the Vice President/Vice Chair will stand in for the President/Chair if that person is unavailable, representing and speaking on behalf of the group at events, and planning and managing meetings, meeting decisions and correspondence.

When standing in for short periods of time (e.g. one hour to three months), the Vice President/Vice Chair should follow the above guidelines to exercise their responsibility appropriately, and not offer leadership that is evidently at odds with the views and directions of the President/Chair. People in these two executive leadership roles don’t have to be on exactly ‘the same page’ but it is unhelpful when others can clearly see that they regularly have opposing views.

If standing in for a longer period of time then, of necessity, the Vice President/Vice Chair’s personal style and perspectives will increasingly shape the group’s directions and dynamics.

**SECRETARY**

The Secretary needs to:

* Develop a good working relationship with the President/Chair and key school contact person.
* Negotiate with the President/Chair who will be responsible for receiving, answering, reporting and distributing correspondence.
* Prepare and distribute draft meeting minutes/notes in a timely manner.
* Prepare and promptly distribute summaries of agreed items/actions, ‘owners’ and timeframes if the full proceedings of a meeting can’t be made available in a timely manner.
* Maintain an updated file of meeting papers, minutes/notes, correspondence and other relevant documents.

**TREASURER**

The Treasurer needs to liaise with the Principal/Business Manager/Bursar regarding the financial processes and procedures required for the management of the group’s funds including:

* Banking, payment of invoices and accounts, issuance of receipts.
* Record keeping.
* Financial reporting to the Board and the broader school community at the group’s AGM.

The Treasurer is advised to NOT take sole responsibility for receiving or storing funds raised by the group and to NEVER take money home. School processes should be clarified and followed.