



ACT
Government

School Boards Handbook

Operations



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Publication date: 20 October 2021

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PART 1 - OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

School-based management and decision making is a longstanding and well-embedded philosophy in the ACT public education system, having been an underpinning principle of school management since 1976.

School boards work in partnership with the principal and school communities. They have specific responsibility for endorsing and overseeing the strategic direction and priorities of the school; monitoring and reviewing school performance; developing, maintaining and reviewing curriculum; and approving budgets for the effective use of school resources; and management of financial risk.

School boards provide robust forward-thinking governance at the local level to ensure that schools meet the present and future needs of their school community. School boards are supported by the Education Directorate (the Directorate) to ensure that their responsibilities are fulfilled effectively.

The [Education Act 2004](#) (the Act) provides the framework for school board operations. Supporting processes must meet government and community expectations. These processes contribute to board effectiveness by supporting the fulfilment of compliance obligations and enhancing board decision making. Boards need to fully appreciate their duties, role and responsibilities in order to be effective and continually improve.

1.1 Description of this handbook

This handbook provides information about the roles and responsibilities of school board members and practical information about school board processes. It forms part of a suite of documents that describe school governance. It is written to assist all board members to perform their roles.

PART 2 - OPERATIONS

2. Introduction

This section provides information about the structure and processes of school boards.

2.1 Board composition

The composition of a school board is determined by whether it is a general school, a school in special circumstances or a school-related institution, as specified in the Act.

2.1.1 General school boards

Most schools are categorised as 'general'. Board membership for 'general' schools comprises of:

- the school principal;
- two student members at high schools and colleges;
- three parents and citizens members, in different combinations depending on whether the school is with a P&C Association. There are three sub-types:
 - member from the parents and citizens association of the school – this member is only relevant where a school has a registered P&C association;
 - member from the parents, guardians and carers of students at the school; and
 - member from the local community of the school (who live in the local area or are otherwise connected to the school);
- two staff members;
- an Appointed Member (based on an expression of interest process); and
- Board Appointed Members (if any).

Information about the number of board positions, method of selection and appointment for each membership category is provided in the following table:

	Principal	Appointed Member	Staff Members	Parents and Citizens Members	Student Members	Board Appointed Members
Number of positions	1	1	2	3	2	2
Selection method	Ex-officio member	Coordinated by the Directorate. Selected without election.	Elected by the school's staff (including casual staff)	<p>For schools with Parents and Citizens Associations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) one Parents and Citizens Association member elected by parents, guardians and carers of students at the school*; and 2) two members elected by parents, guardians and carers of students at the school; and 3) If there are no nominations from parents then a member can be selected from the local community** <p>For schools without Parents and Citizens Associations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) one member elected by parents from nominations of people who live nearby to the school or are otherwise connected with the school (may be from beyond the PEA)** 2) two members elected by the parents, guardians, and carers of students at the school. <p>Schools without a P&C will give priority to fill the local community member positions. If no local community member can be selected, then up to three parents will be selected.</p>	Elected by the school's students*	Selected by the board

	Principal	Appointed Member	Staff Members	Parents and Citizens Members	Student Members	Board Appointed Members
Appointed by	Directorate	Returning Officer	Returning Officer	Returning Officer	Returning Officer	Board
May be reappointed	Not applicable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eligible to be Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Term	Duration of appointment as principal	Prescribed period (no longer than 24 months, ends 31 March)	Prescribed period (no longer than 24 months, ends 31 March)	Prescribed period (no longer than 24 months, ends 31 March)	Prescribed period (no longer than 24 months, ends 31 March)	No longer than 12 months
Other	If the principal is absent, the acting principal fills the principal's position on the school board	Appointed Members bring an independent perspective to the school board. They do not act as an agent of the Directorate and do not have reporting responsibilities to the Directorate.	If they leave the school they are no longer eligible to be a staff member representative.	* Membership of the Parents and Citizens Association is specified in the Association's constitution. It is usually open to all parents, guardians and carers of students at the school. ** The local community position is to be filled (where possible) by someone who lives nearby to or is otherwise connected to the school, but who is not a parent, guardian or carer for a student at the school.	Applies to high schools and colleges only. A list is provided at Appendix 3. * Eligible students attend school or participate in an educational program conducted by the school for a minimum of 12 hours per week.	Board Appointed Members are non-essential positions that should be used to enhance and bring diversity to the school board. They should not be used to provide additional representation from a particular segment of the school community. They take part in board discussions but are ineligible to vote in board decisions.

2.1.2 Schools in special circumstances

Schools declared 'schools in special circumstances' have specific board composition requirements that reflect the school's particular situation. These declarations are made via a [Disallowable Instrument](#) authorised by the Director-General. The composition of the school board for a declared school in special circumstances is determined by the Director-General subject to approval by the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. If you are requiring information about selection and appointment of board members for these schools then please contact the Directorate.

These schools are:

- [Birrigai Outdoor School](#)
- [Black Mountain School](#)
- [Telopea Park School](#)
- [University of Canberra High School Kaleen](#)
- [University of Canberra Senior Secondary College, Lake Ginninderra](#)
- [Woden School](#)

2.1.3 School-related institutions

School-related institutions may be established by the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and have different requirements in relation to eligibility for school board positions as specified in the [Disallowable Instruments](#) for those schools.

These school-related institutions are:

- [Early Childhood Schools](#) (This includes: Isabella Plains Early Childhood School, Lyons Early Childhood School, Narrabundah Early Childhood School, O'Connor Cooperative School and Southern Cross Early Childhood School) and
- [Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre](#).

2.1.4 Election of school board chairperson and deputy chairperson

Members of the school board must elect:

- a member to be chairperson, and
- another member to be deputy chairperson.

Eligibility for election as chairperson or deputy chairperson is shown in the table at 2.1. Eligible board members may self-nominate for the position of chairperson or deputy chairperson. Nominations are not required to be seconded by another board member. The chairperson and deputy chairpersons are roles for people already on the board, they do not create additional positions on the board. The chairperson cannot be the principal of the school or a member of staff of the school or a board appointed member.

A school board may choose to conduct an election of the chairperson and deputy chairperson on an annual basis. The term of appointment of the chairperson or deputy chairperson should be clarified before members are invited to nominate for the positions.

The process for electing a school board chairperson and deputy chairperson is outlined in the process map available on the [School Boards](#) page of the Directorate's website.

A chairperson or deputy chairperson must be elected when the existing chairperson or deputy chairperson's term as a board member expires; or they resign from the position of chairperson or deputy chairperson; or they resign from being a board member.

When electing a chairperson, the school board should consider the timing of a principal selection process (if known), as the chairperson is usually the board's representative on the selection panel, and the panel member must be appropriate for the process. It would be inappropriate for the board chairperson to be on the selection panel if they were a student, or a parent and citizens member of the board who is also a staff member at the school.

The principal must notify the Returning Officer in writing of the election of a member as chairperson or deputy chairperson within five days of the election.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

All members share responsibility for the board’s performance and the fulfilment of its obligations. Certain roles have additional responsibilities. The Director-General and the Directorate also have responsibilities that support school boards to perform their functions.

Role	Responsibility
<p>Board members</p> <p><i>Work with other members to ensure the school board functions in the best interests of the school and its students, and to make the board effective</i></p>	<p>Board role</p> <p><u>Compliance and administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the other members to meet the board’s responsibilities and obligations • Monitor and review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ school performance, including the school satisfaction survey and compliance checklist ○ student performance through school-based and other activities such as NAPLAN ○ school’s strategic risk register • Review the school’s application of Directorate policies • Approve school-based arrangements that implement Directorate policies • Make recommendations to the Director-General about school issues and implement Director-General directions • Act in line with the <i>Education Act 2004</i> or other Territory law and in good faith (<i>Note: Members are not civilly liable for honest acts or omissions</i>) <p><u>Membership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign and abide by the Code of Conduct • Declare a real or perceived conflict of interest before the related board discussion happens • Elect a chairperson and deputy chairperson (cannot be the principal, a staff member or a Board Appointed Member) • Decide if board appointments should be staggered • Appoint up to two Board Appointed Members • Have one board member on a principal’s recruitment panel (usually the chairperson) <p><u>Liaison</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships between the school and the community (including community organisations) • Encourage parents, guardians and carers to be involved in student learning

	<p>Board reporting</p> <p><u>Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve, monitor and review the school budget, ensuring it is aligned with school priorities • Review and approve the school’s half-yearly financial statements • Approve the spending of voluntary financial contributions and any funds held in reserve • Publish a budget summary, 14 days after the board approves it, for the school community to access easily • Set priorities for effectively and efficiently using school resources, including financial resources <p><u>Strategic and action plans</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow Directorate policies and requirements • Endorse the school’s strategic direction and priorities • Oversee the implementation of the five-year School Improvement Plan and annual Action Plan • Review the annual Impact Report <p><u>General activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on school performance via the publication on the school’s website of the Annual School Board Report • Review and approve the school curriculum, within the context of the Australian Curriculum and Director-General’s requirements • Review and approve proposals (at concept stage) for overseas student excursions considering needs for financial support and students with a disability
<p>Chairperson</p> <p><i>Leads the school board, works with the principal, and ensures the board meets its obligations and functions effectively</i></p>	<p>Board role</p> <p><u>Compliance and administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a board member as well as the board’s chairperson • Work with the principal to ensure the board functions effectively and efficiently • Focus the board on strategic issues and activities, not on managing school operations • Manage board meetings • Sign verified meeting minutes • Manage conflicts of interest and conduct issues <p><u>Membership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the induction of new board members • Ensure members understand their roles and responsibilities and sign the Code of Conduct <p><u>Liaison</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate board activities and decisions to the school community

	<p>Board reporting</p> <p><u>General documents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the Annual School Board Report for provision to the school community <p><u>Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise and sign the school’s half-yearly financial statements on behalf of the board • Complete the annual Disclosure of Interest Statement and check it is submitted <p><u>Strategic and action plans</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the five-year School Improvement Plan on behalf of the board
<p>Principal</p> <p><i>Manages the school day to day and reports to the school board on school operations, finance, compliance and risk</i></p>	<p>Board role</p> <p><u>Compliance and administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a board member and the board’s executive officer (<i>Note: some of the administrative functions may be delegated to school support staff</i>) • Implement board decisions • Support the board’s functions • Support the induction of new board members • Manage related administration, including tasks such as keeping records and agendas, and distributing minutes and papers • Ensure the board understands school review processes and NAPLAN program objectives and data confidentiality <p><u>Liaison</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle liaison between the school, the board and the Directorate • Ensure the board communicates effectively with the school community <p><u>Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) selection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an ARO is identified to coordinate board elections (more than one ARO may be needed) • Supply the ARO contact details to the Directorate • Raise any issues around board member appointments with the Returning Officer (Executive Branch Manager, Governance and Community Liaison)

	<p>Board reporting</p> <p><u>General documents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement and report on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the annual school budget ○ the school curriculum ○ strategies and programs to improve school performance ○ school- based arrangements and ensure they align with the Directorate’s policies and requirements ○ the school’s strategic risk register • Report on school compliance with legislation, regulations and policies via the Compliance Checklist <p><u>Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a finance report at each board meeting • Supply a monthly finance report • Endorse half-yearly financial statements for the chairperson to authorise <p><u>Strategic and action plans</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement the five-year School Improvement Plan and annual Action Plan • Advise the board about Directorate policies and priorities <p><u>Annual report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the draft Annual School Board Report for the board to approve • Publish the final report on the school’s website
<p>Representative members</p> <p><i>Chosen from a key stakeholder group (staff, students of high schools and colleges, and parents and citizens) to ensure a balanced and effective board</i></p>	<p>Board role</p> <p><u>Compliance and administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a board member • Represent stakeholder group interests and views, but not be that group’s advocate • Support the board to act in the best interests of the school and all students <p><u>Membership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet board eligibility requirements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a school staff member who currently works at the school, including casual staff ○ a school student who currently attends the school or is doing a school education program at least 12 hours a week (high schools and colleges, or equivalent, only) ○ a parents and citizens member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they are the <i>Parents and Citizens Association</i> member then they must be a member of the Parents and Citizens (P&C) Association of the school as defined in the Association’s constitution. Membership is usually automatic for parents and carers of

	<p>students at the school (including any who teach there). An adult who is not a student's parent or carer must first become a member of the school's P&C.¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they are a parent member then they must be a parent, guardian or carer of a student enrolled at the school. • If they are a <i>local community</i> member they need to live nearby or be otherwise connected with the school, but not a parent, guardian or carer for a student at the school.
	Board reporting
	<p><u>General documents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with and report back to the stakeholder group while meeting the board's confidentiality and privacy requirements
Appointed Member	Board role
<i>Selected by the Directorate to bring an independent view to the board</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a board member
Board Appointed Members	Board role
<i>Selected by the board to enhance and bring diversity to the board</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a board member (<i>Note: these are a non-voting member positions</i>)
Director-General	System role
<i>Responsible to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs for the delivery of ACT public education</i>	<p><u>Compliance and administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ACT public education ○ educational planning processes ○ financial management processes ○ improvement of school performance ○ development and implementation of school curriculum ○ Directorate policy management and school -based arrangements • May give written directions to the school board • Be the Returning Officer for school board appointments (<i>Note: this power is delegated to Executive Branch Manager, Governance and Community Liaison</i>).

¹ Each parents and citizens association has its own constitution. A copy of the current constitution can be obtained from Access Canberra by filling in the Association search request form on their web page: https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1504#!tabs-5.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determines the composition of school boards for schools in special circumstances and school-related institutions, following approval from the Minister.
Directorate	System role
<i>Supports school board operations</i>	<u>Compliance and administration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the Director-General Supports school boards to meet their obligations Advises stakeholders about school governance and board operations Manages Appointed Member appointments Advises principals about board members' legal protection from liability Informs principals of board appointments following approval by the Returning Officer Maintains Directors' and Officers' Insurance cover Provides board member training
Returning Officer	System role
<i>The Returning Officer is the Executive Branch Manager, Governance and Community Liaison</i>	<u>Compliance and administration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoints members to school boards Makes decisions in relation to school board matters e.g. termination of a board member's appointment
Director School Improvement	System role
<i>Supports school boards when required</i>	<u>Compliance and administration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists the board to resolve code of conduct issues Reviews recommendations made by the board to the Director-General about issues affecting the school

2.3 Conduct of school board members

Board members are expected to demonstrate high standards of behaviour and ethical conduct. Members must treat each other and the school's staff, students and community fairly, sensitively, consistently and with respect. It is important for board members to listen to others and be tolerant of their views, even if they differ from their own. In board discussions differences of opinion will invariably arise from the different stakeholder perspectives represented. Board members must be willing to compromise and not let their personal views, or the interests of a stakeholder group that they may represent, become an obstacle to achieving outcomes that are in the best interests of the school and its students.

All school board members must agree to and sign the [Code of Conduct](#) form within one month of their appointment to the board. The signed code of conduct form is to be kept on the school's official board file.

If a member conduct issue arises, the chairperson should take the lead to resolve it and all board members should contribute to its resolution. If it cannot be resolved by the school board then it can

be referred to the Director School Improvement for assistance. Issues requiring independent consideration can be referred in writing to the Returning Officer.

2.4 Termination of board member appointments

A board member's appointment will automatically terminate if the member ceases to be eligible to be appointed to the position i.e.

- for staff members, the person is no longer a member of staff;
- for student members, the person is no longer a student at the school; and
- for parents and citizens association members, the person is no longer a member of the school's Parents and Citizens association
- for parents, guardians and carers members, the person is no longer a parent/guardian/carer of a student at the school
- for a local community members, the person no longer lives nearby to the school nor is otherwise connected with the school.

A board member's appointment will be terminated by the Returning Officer if:

- the member (other than the principal) is absent from three consecutive meetings of the school board without reasonable excuse or leave given by the school board; or
- the member fails to disclose a material conflict of interest without reasonable excuse.

A board member's appointment may also be terminated by the Returning Officer due to the member's misbehaviour or physical or mental incapacity.

2.5 Resignation of board members

A board member may resign at any time. A resignation should be in writing to the chairperson, or to the deputy chairperson if it is the chairperson that is resigning, and a copy provided to the principal. The principal should then provide a copy to the Returning Officer.

The Assistant Returning Officer should then follow instructions in the *School Boards Handbook – Selection and Appointment* to arrange for the resigning board member to be replaced.

2.6 Meetings

The school board meets regularly throughout the year to perform its functions and to meet its obligations. Effective and efficient meetings contribute to board effectiveness. The Act sets out the legislative or minimum requirements for the running of school board meetings including time, place and calling of meetings.

2.6.1 Time and place of meeting

The meeting place and time must be agreed by all school board members and must enable meetings to maintain confidentiality. Conducting school board meetings in public places is not advisable due to issues of confidentiality. A meeting can be conducted in any way that allows members to take part, e.g. in person, by phone, or tele/videoconference.

2.6.2 Attendance at meetings

School board meetings should only be attended by appointed members of the school board. Due to issues of confidentiality, other people must not attend school board meetings unless invited to do so by the principal or chairperson. Invitations to school board meetings must only be made following consultation with the school board.

Additional attendees at the school board meeting must only attend for the agenda item of relevance to them. The person's name and purpose for which they have attended the school board meeting must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

A member who takes part in a meeting by phone or other form of live communication is considered to be present at the meeting.

2.6.3 Calling of meetings

The chairperson:

- may, at any time, call a meeting of the school board; and
- must call a meeting if requested by the Minister, the Director-General or three members of the school board.

If the chairperson is not available to call a meeting for any reason, the deputy chairperson or the principal of the school may call a meeting of the board.

2.6.4 Frequency of meetings

School boards are required to meet a minimum of four times per year.

In order to meet the monthly financial management requirements of school boards as outlined at section 2.6.8, it is advisable that at least two meetings per term are conducted.

2.6.5 Quorum

For a general school board, business may be carried out at a meeting of the school board only if three or more members are present, and at least one of the members present is an appointed staff member (this does not include the principal), and at least one member present is an appointed parents and citizens member (from any of the three sub-categories).

As an example, a meeting would have quorum if a one staff member was present, one parent was present and the principal.

For schools in special circumstances or school-related institutions, the quorum requirement is detailed in the [Disallowable Instrument](#).

2.6.6 Decision making

Decision making by the board should be regarded as a process, not an event. The board should be taken on the journey and involved in the decision to be made. This enables the board to ask questions, seek clarification and reset the course along the way. The board should not be delivered a final product and expected to simply accept what is put to them for approval.

School board members that are elected from staff, students or parents and citizens bring the interests and views of their stakeholder group to the board; however, they are not advocates for the group. They perform their roles in an independent capacity and must do so in accordance with their duty as board members to act in the best interests of the school and its students.

At a meeting of the school board, each member (other than a Board Appointed Member) has a vote on each matter to be decided. Any matter to be decided must be discussed fully at a meeting of the board and the outcome of the discussion recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Decision-making at school board meetings is usually by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the chairperson, or acting chairperson, must put the matter to a vote of members, which is usually conducted by a show of hands. In the event of a tied vote, the chairperson of the meeting has the casting vote.

A resolution of the school board may be needed if a decision must be made by the school board between scheduled meetings and a special meeting cannot be called. A resolution is valid, even though a decision has not been made at a meeting of the school board; if:

- all members (other than Board Appointed Members) agree in writing to the proposed resolution. This may occur by email or other form of correspondence; and
- notice of the resolution is provided to all school board members (including Board Appointed Members).

The matter of the resolution must be placed on the agenda of the next school board meeting and details of the resolution included in the minutes.

2.6.7 Agenda and papers for meeting

At least one week prior to each board meeting, the principal must ensure that members of the school board receive an agenda and other relevant papers to enable them to prepare for the meeting. The agenda is prepared by the principal in consultation with the school board chairperson.

The agenda usually contains the following items:

- an acknowledgement of country
- attendance/apologies
- disclosure of interest
- minutes of previous meeting
- business arising from previous meeting
- correspondence
- reports – for example principal, parents and citizens, student, finance, or sub-committees
- extraordinary business
- general business
- next meeting

Any member of the school board is entitled to suggest that the agenda be altered. Any changes to the meeting agenda should be proposed to the principal at least 72 hours before the meeting. The principal is required to consult with the school board chairperson in relation to proposed changes to the meeting agenda. Approved changes to the agenda should be provided to school board members at least 24 hours before the meeting.

2.6.8 Acknowledgement of country

We do acknowledgements of country in meetings to recognise that we are meeting on other people's country and to pay our respects to those people and their long and continuing relationship with the land. An acknowledgement is not a welcome to country (which are done by aboriginal elders, traditional owners/custodians). The practice of acknowledgements stems from traditional ceremonial processes when aboriginal people went to other people's country.

The template text below provides a basic guide of things you can say in an acknowledgement of country. It is open to the person delivering the acknowledgement to tailor it to the situation. An idea is to take it in turns having different members of the board delivering the acknowledgement at each meeting.

Template wording for an acknowledgement of country:

"I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the connections to the land. I also acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may be attending this meeting or at this school"

2.6.9 Finance report

A finance report must be tabled at each meeting by the principal.

A finance report must also be provided to all members of the school board on a monthly basis to ensure that the school board is able to fulfil its responsibilities to monitor the financial performance and wellbeing of the school. The finance report may be distributed electronically for this purpose.

Board members with a concern in relation to the finance report should raise the issue at the next board meeting to ensure that all members can contribute to the discussion.

Support for school board financial matters can be provided by the Directorate.

2.6.10 Minutes and record keeping

Boards are required to keep minutes of meetings. Minutes must be an accurate account of the proceedings at the meeting, including a correct record of those present, the important things that occurred (including matters discussed and decisions made), and business that was undertaken. The record of discussions should summarise the key considerations in reaching a decision but not name individuals or the issues they raised. Minutes must record what a board member said or did at a meeting, i.e., the member attended the meeting and proposed or seconded a resolution, but not that they voted against a decision.

Minutes are not a transcript of the meeting. They should be concise, clear, provide sufficient information to be intelligible to a member who was not at the meeting, and outcomes-focused.

Minutes must be verified by the attending board members as a true and accurate record prior to being signed by the chairperson.

Members of the school board should receive draft minutes of the meeting within one week of the board meeting to which they relate. The draft minutes can be distributed electronically and should also be provided with the papers for the next meeting of the board.

A suggested template for board minutes is provided at Appendix 2.

School board records are considered Directorate records and therefore are subject to the provisions of the [Freedom of Information Act 2016 \(ACT\)](#) (FOI Act). This means that any member of the public has a legally enforceable right to make a request under the FOI Act for access to school board

records. The FOI Act is biased towards disclosure and access will be given unless the information is deemed to be, on balance, contrary to the public interest to disclose.

The [Information Privacy Act 2014](#) also provides principles for the handling and management of personal information by ACT public sector agencies which apply to school boards. These affect what information should be presented to the board, how it should be presented, and the recording of information in board minutes.

2.7 Chairing the board

The position of chairperson has specific responsibilities as outlined in section 2.2.

The chairperson presides at all meetings of the school board and should be familiar with the processes for conducting board meetings as outlined in section 2.6. Prior to the meeting commencing, the chairperson must be satisfied that the meeting has been properly convened and a quorum is present, including throughout the duration of the meeting.

The chairperson must ensure that school board members understand the matters to be discussed at meetings of the board, have the opportunity to contribute to discussions and understand the decision that the board has been requested to make. The chairperson is responsible for maintaining the orderly conduct of the meeting within the allotted time, including allowing appropriate time for the discussion of all agenda items, managing conflicts of interest and ensuring that the focus is on relevant matters.

If the elected chairperson is absent, the deputy chairperson must preside. If the chairperson and deputy chairperson are both absent, a school board member is chosen by the members present to preside for that meeting only. Details of the presiding member for the meeting must be recorded in the minutes. The principal, staff members and Board Appointed Members are not eligible to preside at a meeting of the school board, as outlined at section 2.1.

The presiding member at the meeting is responsible for all functions associated with the role of elected school board chairperson, including chairing the meeting, signing the minutes of the previous meeting, and presiding in the event of a matter to be decided.

If a student member is elected as school board chair and is not 18 years of age, all documents and reports must be counter-signed by another school board member who is 18 years of age or older.

2.8 Sub-committees

School boards may not have the capacity to attend to all business on the agenda at a meeting and may leave some business to be acted upon between meetings. Sub-committees may be set up to deal with routine school board business, as well as matters such as preparing a response to correspondence, developing a submission to fund a project, or a specific policy matter.

A sub-committee of the school board must consist of at least one school board member. All of the other members of the committee may be drawn from other areas of the school community. The sub-committee may seek the input from the school community or other relevant stakeholders. For significant issues and those requiring stakeholder engagements, the sub-committee should develop a consultation plan for consideration and decision by the board. The board must be kept informed about the sub-committee's activities and the matter tasked to the sub-committee must be presented to the board for decision.

2.9 Confidential information and data

School boards will be provided with confidential information and data to enable them to fulfil their responsibility for monitoring and reviewing school performance. Information and data that is presented to the board must not identify individual students or teachers.

The [Code of Conduct](#) for board members contains specific references to the requirement for student and school achievement data to be treated as confidential, not used to compare students or teachers, not used to judge teacher performance and not disclosed.

2.10 Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation arising from a real or perceived conflict between the performance of a member's duty to the board and private or personal interests. A conflict of interest exists if:

- any member has a direct or indirect interest in an issue being considered by the board; and
- the interest could influence the member's consideration, and therefore the school board's consideration, of the issue.

A conflict of interest may arise from:

- other board membership or employment;
- personal, professional or business interests and associations;
- investment interests; or
- family or other relationships.

The [Code of Conduct](#) for board members requires all members to declare and disclose any conflict with the interests of the school or education system.

Board members must disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest prior to the board undertaking any discussion about the matter.

Disclosure of interests should be a standing agenda item at each board meeting and addressed as an early agenda item in the meeting proceedings.

A conflict of interest may be managed by the member:

- not taking any part in the discussion of the board relating to the interest or issue;
- not voting on the matter;
- being absent from the meeting when the discussion or vote is taking place; or
- not receiving any relevant board papers in relation to the issue.

The chairperson should decide how to manage the conflict of interest and record reasons for that decision in the meeting minutes. If the quorum is lost due to the member's exclusion from the discussion, the meeting cannot continue and needs to be adjourned until a quorum is obtained or the issue in question carried over to the next meeting.

The minutes should record the following information about a disclosed conflict of interest:

1. the member's name and position on the board,
2. the issue being considered by the board,
3. the nature of the conflict of interest, and
4. how the conflict of interest was managed.

Examples of conflicts of interest are:

John Brown is a staff member appointed to a school board. He is an outdoor education teacher and is the teacher in charge of a proposed overseas excursion. As overseas excursions require school board consideration at the concept stage, John's proposal is submitted to the board. John has a conflict of interest as he would like the overseas excursion to be approved by the school board. John should declare that he is the teacher in charge of the overseas excursion and that he has a conflict of interest in relation to the board's decision to approve the excursion. John should not participate in further discussion about the overseas excursion (other than to provide factual information if requested by the board) or vote in relation to the board's decision. The chairperson may consider asking John to leave the room when the matter is being voted on. Information about the conflict of interest and John's exclusion from the discussion should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Margaret Green is a parents and citizens member appointed to the school board. Margaret's partner owns a company that supplies shade shelters to schools. When the school board considers installing a shade shelter in the playground, Margaret has a conflict of interest and must declare it to the board. Margaret should not participate in the discussion or decision for the selection of a supplier. The chairperson should ask Margaret to leave the room while the discussion is undertaken and the board makes its decision. Information about Margaret's conflict of interest and exclusion from the discussion should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

An example of how this could be recorded in the minutes in John's case is:

A conflict of interest was declared by staff member John Brown in relation to the proposed overseas excursion (agenda item X), as John is the teacher in charge of the excursion. The chairperson determined that John should remain in the meeting to answer any factual questions but would leave the room for the board's discussion and vote.

At the agenda item in the minutes it should be recorded that:

John Brown left the room for the board's discussion and vote on the matter and returned for the next agenda item.

Examples of situations that may represent a conflict of interest for a board member are if the member is:

1. A parent or guardian or carer of a child at the school and discussions of the school board relates to matters that may affect the child
2. A staff member employed at the school and discussions of the school board relate to a class or programs that the staff member is involved in
3. A student at the school and discussions relate to programs that the student is involved in
4. An employee of the Directorate and discussions of the school board relate to programs or activities that the employee administers
5. Involved in (or a family member is involved in) a company or organisation that may be associated in any way with the school
6. Provided with a gift, offer or suggestion in relation to their role as a board member
7. Associated with any other commercial or community organisation that may support or sponsor the school in any way

In any of the above situations, a real or perceived conflict of interest may exist and must be declared to the school board prior to the matter being discussed.

2.10.1 Annual disclosure of conflict of interest declaration

By 14 July each year, the chairperson of the board must provide the Returning Officer with a statement of any conflicts of interest declared to the board during the previous financial year. The chairperson must ensure that the [Disclosure of Interest Statement](#) is submitted, including a nil return. A copy must be retained by the school on the official board file.

2.11 Board Deliverables and Authorities

The school board has direct responsibility for considering a range of matters on the school's behalf and for the production of specific deliverables.

2.11.1 Strategic directions and priorities

The overarching principles associated with high quality educational practices in ACT public schools are published in [People, Practice and Performance – School improvement in Canberra public schools – A framework for performance and accountability, 2016](#). It provides school communities with a conceptual framework for continuous improvement, reporting and accountability. The Framework provides schools with guidance and related tools to support schools make decisions using an evidence-based approach within an authorised environment of legislation, policies, standards and similar guidance materials. Schools will generally set new directions following an external review undertaken every five years.

Across the five year cycle the principal will advise and seek input from the board on the management and implementation of the school's improvement journey.

Schools have been provided with three tools to evaluate their effectiveness:

1. the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT), consisting of nine Domains that are critical for achieving success, focussing on practices that are most directly related to school-wide improvements and outcomes for students;
2. the School Wellbeing Check, which is linked to the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework; and
3. the National Quality Standard for Pre Schools.

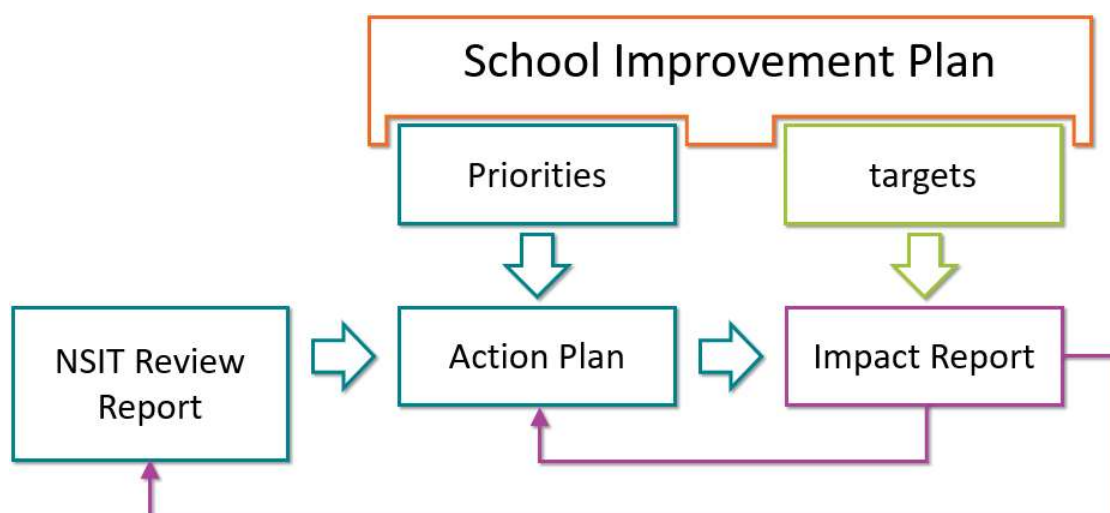
School improvement in ACT public schools is based on five-year and annual support and planning cycles. Every five years a school will participate in a School Review. Following the Review, the school develops their next five-year School Improvement Plan based on multiple sources of system and school-based evidence and review findings.

The School Improvement Plan is implemented annually through an Action Plan which is in turn reported against through an annual Impact Report. The Impact Report is complemented by the Annual School Board Report that provides boards with the opportunity to communicate their activities for the year to the broader school community, whilst also meeting reporting requirements as described through legislation and regulations.

Information made publicly available through school websites includes the NSIT Report of Review, School Improvement Plan, Impact Reports and Annual School Board Reports. Action Plans are internal working documents and are typically not shared with the broader community.

Working closely with the principal, school boards have a key monitoring and review role during the development and implementation of each improvement planning or reporting mechanism. The interaction of these mechanisms is presented in the diagram below.

Integrated school improvement planning and reporting tools



Additional information about each of the planning tools is available at Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms. Any queries should be directed to the school principal.

2.11.2 Annual School Board Report

School boards must approve an annual report on the school's operations during the calendar year. The report must be published on the school's website by 27 May of the following year to meet Australian Government requirements. The principal will produce a draft report for review by the board, submit the report for board review and approval, sign the report with the chairperson, and publish it on the school's website.

The purpose of the Annual School Board Report is to:

- provide information about school performance;
- celebrate school achievements; and
- provide information about the school to the Directorate.

The Annual School Board Report is an important element of the Directorate's information system. It reports system level and national data (e.g. school enrolments and attendance, School Satisfaction Survey results, and NAPLAN results) as required by legislation and regulations. The report also demonstrates school accountability to the community.

The Australian Government requires a copy of the Annual School Board Report to be available for the school community in hard copy (if requested) and on the school's website. It is the responsibility of the principal and the chairperson to ensure that a full copy or a summary of the annual report is made available to the school community within 14 days of approving the annual report, and by no later than 27 May.

2.11.3 Financial matters

The board is responsible for approving budgets, half-yearly financial statements, and the spending of voluntary financial contributions and any funds held in reserve. The school board is required to report on these items in the Annual School Board Report.

The board must approve the budget by 30 November of each year to ensure that the school has authority to commit expenditure from 1 January of the following year. The budget must be noted by the school board at the first meeting of the following year.

Within 14 days of approving the budget for the year, the school board must make a summary of the budget available to the school community. This requirement is usually satisfied by including a notice in the school newsletter advising that the board has approved the budget and that a copy is available from the school.

Any amendment to the approved budget during the year is subject to board approval and must be included in the copy of the budget available from the school.

The Board may allow minor variations (e.g. less than \$1,000) to be actioned by the principal without prior Board approval, subject to reporting at the next board meeting. The school's size and needs may be factors considered by the school board when setting the limit for minor variations by the principal.

To develop the budget, the board and principal should identify school development needs and set priorities for expenditure. Some boards set up a finance sub-committee, which, in conjunction with the principal, prepares a draft budget for board consideration that is aligned with the priorities identified by the board.

Funds collected by the Parents and Citizens Association that are donated to the school board must be recorded in the School's Annual Financial Statement which forms part of the Annual School Board Report.

2.11.4 Compliance assessment and audits

Each semester schools assess compliance with legislation, regulations and policies relevant to the management of schools using the Compliance Checklist. The checklist focuses on the key compliance requirements for schools and principals and alerts them to areas of partial compliance or non-compliance that need to be addressed.

The principal is responsible for completing the Compliance Checklist by the end of each semester.

The principal is also responsible for providing the completed Compliance Checklist and reporting fully on the results (compliant, partially compliant and non-compliant) to the board for review at the board's first meeting after the Compliance Checklist is completed.

The responses and topics included in the Compliance Checklist are subject to annual audits by the Directorate on a rotating schedule (approximately 12 schools included per year). Internal audits support continuous improvement and identify areas requiring further support for school operations.

2.11.5 Risk management

The School Strategic Risk Register documents the assessment of the school's risks. It is a tool to identify improvement opportunities with a focus on innovation and as well as deficit. The register is an important tool for the school board to consider when making decisions about matters such as the school's budget and annual Action Plan. It should be reviewed at least annually by the board. It should also be reviewed if there is a critical incident at the school to determine if controls are adequate, further treatments are needed, or if a new risk should be added.

2.11.6 Curriculum

The [Australian Curriculum](#) provides the overarching framework for curriculum compliance in schools. However, it does not address all curriculum requirements and does not prescribe how they should be implemented. Schools are required to develop certain curriculum elements for their own implementation in accordance with the requirements set by the Director-General.

School boards must ensure that the school is implementing the curriculum requirements determined by the Director-General. Boards should also ensure that resources are allocated through the budget to priority learning areas identified through the School Improvement Plan and annual Action Plan.

The principal is responsible for developing the school curriculum, within the context of the Australian Curriculum and Director-General's requirements, for board consideration, and for implementing the curriculum following board approval.

P-10 curriculum

School boards can satisfy their obligations to the P-10 curriculum by ensuring that the following items are addressed, at a minimum:

Requirement	
Is the curriculum meeting ACT and national requirements?	Yes/No
Are the principles that guide the school's curriculum available to the school community?	Yes/No
Is there evidence of differentiation to meet the needs of students requiring additional support and those requiring extension?	Yes/No
Is there a variety of teaching and assessment strategies designed to address the individual needs of students?	Yes/No
Are there relevant and accessible resources?	Yes/No
Is there a process to evaluate, on a regular basis, curriculum programs and to use this evidence to refine programs?	Yes/No
Do curriculum documents provide guidance to teachers so that they can deliver quality programs?	Yes/No
Are all requirements of year 10 certification met?	Yes/No
Are there opportunities for student access to vocational learning?	Yes/No
Are changes to the school's curriculum discussed and approved by the school board?	Yes/No

Years 11-12 curriculum

The years 11 and 12 curriculum requires the school board to have an understanding of certification processes and requirements for successful student transition to work or further study. The school board chairperson should countersign with the principal all proposals for the development of courses for the college's own use (i.e. 'type one' courses as defined by the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS)), as well as minor variations and course proposals, before they are submitted to the BSSS for consideration by an accreditation panel.

School boards can satisfy their obligations to oversee the allocation of resources and provide guidance on priorities for teaching and learning by ensuring that the following items are addressed:

Requirement

Is the curriculum meeting ACT and national requirements?	Yes/No
Is there a variety of teaching and assessment strategies designed to address the individual needs of students?	Yes/No
Are there relevant and accessible resources?	Yes/No
Is there a process to evaluate, on a regular basis, curriculum programs and to use this evidence to refine programs?	Yes/No
Do curriculum documents provide guidance to teachers so that they can deliver quality programs?	Yes/No
Are there opportunities for student access to vocational learning?	Yes/No
Is information about the curriculum available to the school community?	Yes/No
Are changes to the school's curriculum discussed and approved by the school board?	Yes/No

2.11.7 School-based arrangements

The school board oversees and approves school-based arrangements that implement the Directorate's policies. They must be consistent with, and refer to, any relevant Directorate policy. If a Directorate policy does not fully meet the needs of the school community, a school-based arrangement should be developed.

The development of school-based arrangements should be informed by sources including:

- the [Education Act 2004](#);
- Directorate policies and procedures;
- Directorate Strategic Plan;
- the school's vision statement; and
- the School Improvement Plan.

School-based arrangements should be brief and concise. They should include the purpose of the arrangement, the outcomes it will deliver, the link to the school's vision or School Improvement Plan and applicable policy, and information about how it will be implemented. Any supporting documents must be provided as an attachment and it must include the date of approval and review dates.

School-based arrangements must be developed in consultation with the school community and any stakeholders that may be affected by the procedure. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to stakeholder engagement. It will vary depending on the subject matter and its complexity and a range of methods may be required to engage with different sectors of the school community. As a general rule, draft documents should be made available for a consultation period decided by the board (usually six weeks), stakeholders must be able to access the draft documents and they must be invited to provide input that may inform the final draft document.

The ACT Government's publication [Engaging Canberrans: A guide to community engagement](#) is a useful resource for planning and implementing an engagement strategy.

Following stakeholder consultation, the draft documents must be provided to the school board for consideration and approval.

2.11.8 Overseas school excursions

Proposed overseas excursions must be submitted to the school board for approval at the concept stage in accordance with the [Overseas Excursions](#) policy.

The school board should consider all financial aspects of the overseas excursion before approving a proposal to ensure that access and participation in overseas excursions is not prevented for reasons of disability or financial disadvantage. School boards may explore a number of fund raising activities or existing budgetary sources to support students. The decision to provide financial support to an excursion is at the discretion of the school board and principal and must be considered on a case by case and de-identified basis to protect the privacy of students and families.

2.11.9 Encourage parent participation in children's learning

School boards have a responsibility to encourage parent, guardian and carer participation in their children's learning. The school board works in partnership with the principal to achieve this objective. School boards should encourage the provision of information to the school community that encourages participation in the education of students. This might include the use of the school's newsletter, handbooks or manuals, the school's website or library resources to publish the required information.

Consultation procedures may include meetings or information sessions on targeted topics or agenda items for the Parents and Citizens Association.

Guidance is available in the publication [Education Capital: Progressing Parental Engagement](#).

2.11.10 Partnerships with the community

One of the functions of school boards is to develop relationships between the school and the community; and between the school and community organisations.

Partnerships between schools and the community can provide learning and achievement opportunities for students which should be of interest to, and fostered by, the board.

As schools are a significant part of the local community; community groups, including individuals, local businesses and government, are often interested in investing in, and working with, schools because they provide a hub for further connections within the community.

School boards should give consideration to establishing and maintaining partnerships with the community in the school's annual Action Plan, having regard to Directorate policies, frameworks and initiatives.

Partnerships should be deliberate and strategic, provide access to resources not available within the school and be explicitly focussed on improving student outcomes. Significant partnerships should be carefully planned and be established in response to an identified need.

Significant partnerships should be supported by explicit processes that ensure efficient communication, monitoring and review of the effectiveness. This includes resourcing to ensure sustainability and gathering of clear evidence that partnerships are having their intended impact.

2.11.11 Corporate sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as the negotiated provision of funds, goods or services to schools in exchange for advertising, publicity or other benefits, in return for negotiated and approved (by an appropriate Directorate representative) benefits.

The Directorate has a responsibility to the community to ensure that any sponsorship arrangements are transparent and accountable.

The Directorate's [Corporate Sponsorship](#) policy and School Management Manual (internal publication) provide procedures for schools entering into sponsorship arrangements and school boards must adhere to these requirements when considering and approving proposals.

School boards are required to include details of all current sponsorship income and expenditure in the Annual School Board Report, including details of how each sponsorship benefited students. School boards retain the right to decide whether or not to participate in Directorate-wide sponsorship.

2.11.12 Directions by the Director-General

School boards are required to give effect to the Director-General's directions. The board must be satisfied that processes and procedures are in place to ensure that action is undertaken in an appropriate and timely manner.

2.11.13 Recommendations to the Director-General

School boards may make recommendations to the Director-General on issues affecting the school that cannot be addressed through other channels. School boards are empowered to make recommendations they deem appropriate within their functions prescribed in the Act.

Recommendations to the Director-General from the board should be endorsed by the principal and school board chairperson and a copy provided to the relevant Director School Improvement by the principal.

2.12 Establishing the board for a new school

The requirement for school boards to approve budgets, approve school-based arrangements and endorse the strategic direction and priorities for the school is impractical for a new school because some decisions need to be made prior to the school commencing operations, and it is not feasible for the school board to be established in advance. For example, new schools need to have matters such as school uniform colours and styles confirmed, and to meet mandatory pre-school registration requirements, before the school opens. Whilst the board would normally consider these matters, it is not possible to conduct board member selection processes when staff have not been identified and the parent/guardian/carer community is not settled.

The principal should aim to establish the board to commence from 1 April in the year that the school opens, with staggered appointments to staff, student (if applicable) and parents and citizens member positions so that all positions do not become vacant at the same time. Parents and citizens members should be elected from the entire parent/carer community of the school and from the local community. If a Parents and Citizens Association has been formed, one member should be elected from the parents and citizens association, and two should be elected from the parents, carers and guardians of students at the school. If no P&C association has been formed then one member should be elected from the local community and two should be elected from the parents, carers and guardians of the students at the school.

Consideration may be given to seeking a person for the position of Appointed Member that provides a supplementary skillset to other positions on the board, such as a community member with knowledge of future plans for the area, a migrant resources centre if there is high cultural diversity in the community, or a community engagement specialist.

Once the board has been established, any pre-determined school-based arrangements should be presented to the board for ratification. This process should be completed within six months of the board's commencement.

2.13 Work-plan

The school board should have a rolling work-plan to enable the scheduling of time in meetings at appropriate times of the year for key cyclical activities. The work-plan will be informed by the calendar of key dates published on the [School Boards](#) webpage and the stage that the school is at in its five year improvement cycle. An example of a work-plan is:

Board activity	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Strategic planning	Annual Action Plan										
Reporting		Annual school board report									
Financial management	Budget for new year Half yearly financial statements				Half yearly financial statements			Budget development for next year	Budget approval for next year		
School performance data							NAPLAN results				Impact Report
School compliance data	Compliance checklist results				Compliance checklist results						Strategic risk register

2.14 Insurance and accident cover for board members

All members of a school board are covered under the following insurances:

- Public Liability
- Directors' and Officers'
- Personal Accident

School staff who are board members are covered by the same public liability insurance and workers' compensation insurance as when they are working during school hours. They are also covered for wrongful decisions made as directors and officers of school boards under the Directorate's, Directors' and Officers' Insurance policy.

Personal accident insurance provides cover for volunteers, including board members, but excludes benefits which can be recovered elsewhere, for example, Medicare. Personal accident cover is not Workers' Compensation insurance.

Board members may wish to consider their own additional insurance cover as the Directorate's insurance cover does not include personal effects, clothing or other property that volunteers own or are responsible for. Further information relating to insurance arrangements for volunteers such as board members, refer to the Directorate's [Volunteers and Visitors policy](#).

Insurance definitions

- *Public liability insurance* protects the insured from medical, legal and any subsequent damages arising from a claim made by a member of the public arising from an accident or incident occurring on the insured's property.
- *Incident* includes any circumstance which may subsequently give rise to a claim.
- *Insurance claim* relates to a claimant who has completed an insurance claim form, submitted the form to the insurance company, including the demand for compensation. A claim may or may not involve legal proceedings.

If a school board member has an accident or injury whilst performing duties for the board, the processes in the Directorate's [Injury Management toolkit](#) should be followed. All accidents and incidents must be reported to the Directorate's Injury Management team within 48 hours.

In the event of a work-related accident/incident or circumstance that did or could have resulted in an accident or incident, Directorate employees are required to report the incident in the ACT Government accident / incident reporting system (RiskMan) which can be accessed through the Directorate's intranet.

If a board member who is not a Directorate employee is involved in an accident or sustains an injury, they should contact the principal for assistance. The school should report the incident in RiskMan on behalf of the board member.

If a member is injured during their performance of their school board duties 'off site' i.e. not on or within the school premises, the notification process is the same as if the injury occurred on-site and a Riskman report should be completed.

PART 3 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

3. Frequently Asked Questions

Q How often does the school board meet?

A The school board must meet at least four times a year, but it can meet more often if it so chooses. It is advisable for the board to meet two times each term in order to satisfy financial management requirements.

Q When does the school board meet?

A It meets at the times determined by the board as a whole.

Q How long is a term of appointment to the school board?

A Members are elected from the date of effect of their appointment (usually 1 April) for a period of at least 12 months and not more than 24 months. The general practice is to elect people for a period of 24 months, with half the board elected each year. This provides continuity of knowledge and skills on boards.

Board Appointed Members are appointed for a period of not more than 12 months.

Q Who can vote at the meetings?

A All members, other than Board Appointed Members, of school boards have a vote on each matter to be decided by the board.

Q Who has the casting vote?

A If the votes are equal, the chairperson has the casting vote. If the elected chairperson is absent, the member presiding as chairperson at the meeting has the casting vote

Q What is the quorum for meetings?

A A quorum for a general school board is three members, with:

- at least one staff member (which cannot just be the principal), and
- at least one parents and citizens member.

The third member of the quorum may be any board member that has voting rights.

In schools in special circumstances and school related-institutions a quorum may be constituted differently. More information about these school boards is detailed in the relevant [Disallowable Instrument](#).

Q Who can attend board meetings? Can people attend as observers?

A Meetings can only be attended by the principal (ex-officio member) and appointed members.

Due to the confidential nature of discussions, observers may not attend board meetings.

Additional attendees at a school board meeting must be invited by the principal or chairperson following consultation with the board and only attend for the agenda item that is relevant to them.

Q Can minutes of the school board meetings include individual student information or data?

A Board members and minute-takers of board meetings need to be aware of the importance of confidentiality and privacy when recording information in minutes and the [Code of Conduct](#) for school boards should be adhered to at all times.

Minutes must not contain:

- any information on achievement which could enable individual students to be compared or schools to be ranked
- student achievement information that could be used publicly to promote schools, teachers or principals, and
- information about student achievement that could be misused.

Q Are minutes of board meetings subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests?

A Yes.

Q How much information should be recorded in the minutes?

A Minutes should be to the point, without bias or embellishment and as true to the proceedings as possible. They should not be a transcript of the meeting.

Q I am a member of a school board and the CEO of an IT company. Do I need to declare this information and is this recorded in the minutes?

A Yes, if it is relevant to an issue to be considered by the board. In a situation where the board discusses a financial issue in which you have an interest, you must not take part in the board's decision. This may require that you to not be present when the board considers the issue.

Q Can a board member be removed from their position?

A Yes. A board member's appointment is automatically terminated if the member ceases to be eligible to be appointed to the position (i.e. for staff members, the appointed member is no longer a member of staff; for student members, the appointed member is no longer a student at the school; for parents and citizens association members, the appointed member is no longer a member of the school's parents and citizens association; for parent, guardian and carer members, the appointed member is no longer a parent or guardian or carer of a student at the school, or for a local community member, the appointed member no longer lives in the local area or otherwise connected to the school);

The board member's appointment will be terminated by the Returning Officer if:

- the member (other than the principal) is absent from three consecutive meetings of the school board without reasonable excuse or leave given by the school board; or
- the member fails to disclose a material conflict of interest without reasonable excuse.

A board member's appointment may be terminated by the Returning Officer due to misbehaviour or physical or mental incapacity.

Q Can a board member resign?

A Yes. A board member can resign at any time. The resignation should be in writing to the chairperson, or deputy chairperson if it is the chairperson that is resigning, and a copy provided to the principal. The principal should then provide a copy to the Returning Officer.

The Assistant Returning Officer should then follow instructions in the School Boards Handbook – Selection and Appointment to arrange for the resigning board member to be replaced.

Q Are board members personally liable for board decisions and actions?

A No. Board members are not civilly liable for acts or omissions done honestly in the exercise of their functions as a board member.

PART 4 - SUPPORT

4. Support for school boards

Training

All appointed school board members are invited to attend training activities offered periodically by the Directorate.

Resources

Comprehensive information about school board functions is available on the [School Boards pages](#) of the Directorate's website, including a fact sheet of [information sources](#).

The Directorate's website also provides information about system priorities and strategies, policies and programs.

Contact us

For more information about school board matters, contact the school's principal in the first instance. If the principal is unable to assist, contact the Governance and Community Liaison Branch: **phone:** 02 6207 6846 or **email:** EDUSchoolBoards@act.gov.au.

PART 5 - APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Glossary of terms
Appendix 2	Minutes template
Appendix 3	Schools with student board members

Glossary of Terms

- **Action Plan** is the annual planning tool developed by schools that maps strategies, processes, programs, interventions and resources required to achieve desired impact (Priorities) for students.
- **Annual School Board Report** is the annual report required by the [Education Act 2004](#) about the board's operations during the year. The report is approved by the board, provides evidence that school goals and system commitments are being achieved, and Australian Government requirements are being met.
- **Appointed Member** is a member of the board appointed by the Returning Officer to present an independent view to the school board. The Appointed Member is selected by the Directorate and appointed without election.
- **Appointment of members** occurs when the Returning Officer formally appoints elected members. The board can appointment a specific category of members - Board Appointed Members.
- **Board Appointed Member** is a membership position appointed by the board to ensure that the unique features of the school are represented and to bring in expertise that the board needs but doesn't have. The number of Board Appointed Member positions on the board is up to two for general schools and is specified in the relevant Disallowable Instrument for schools in special circumstances or school-related institutions. They are non-voting member positions. The term for a Board Appointed Member is up to 12 months.
- **Conflict of interest** is a situation arising from a real or perceived conflict between the performance of the board member's duty and private or personal interests. A conflict of interest can range from minor to severe.
- [Education Act 2004](#) details the requirements for education and training in the ACT.
- **Ex-officio member** is membership that arises by virtue of a person's position. The principal of a school is an ex-officio member of the school's board.
- **Half-year** means a period of six months ending on either 30 June or 31 December.
- **Impact Report** is the primary means by which a school reports annually to the community and the Directorate on the student-impact of its improvement efforts. Generated by the school, it describes accumulation and analysis of evidence over time of progress against school Priorities, the outcomes of actions undertaken in the current Action Plan and school contributions to whole-of-system Strategic Indicators.
- **Legal protection** means that board members who act honestly are not civilly liable for acts or omissions done in the exercise of their functions as a board member.

- **Local community** member is to be filled (where possible) by someone who lives nearby or is otherwise connected to the school, but who is not a parent, guardian or carer for a student at the school.
- **National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy** (NAPLAN) is a national program of assessment undertaken of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in May each year. NAPLAN results provide information about student achievements in relation to proficiency levels in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy.
- **NSIT** is the research-based National School Improvement Tool utilised across Australian schools, it is available from <https://www.acer.org/au/school-improvement/improvement-tools/national-school-improvement-tool>
- **Parents and citizens members** are three members to represent the experiences and viewpoints of parents and citizens on the board. There are three sub-categories depending on the circumstances of the school: local community member, parents, guardians and carers representative member, and parents and citizens association representative.
- **Parents and citizens association member** (sub-category) is a representative position on the school board that is held by a member of the school’s Parents & Citizens Association. Eligibility for membership of the Parents and Citizens Association is defined in each Association’s constitution and is usually open to all parents/carers of students at the school.
- **Parents, guardians and carers** (sub category) is a representative position on the school board that is held by people who are a parent or guardian or carer of a student at the school.
- **People, Practice and Performance – School improvement in Canberra public schools – A framework for performance and accountability, 2016** provides ACT government schools with a structure for raising quality, achieving excellence and delivering better schools for better futures. This is available on the [Publications A-Z](#) page on the Directorate’s website.
- **Priorities** are the ‘big ticket’ items a school intends to work on and are focused on student outcomes. They incorporate explicit targets from multiple sources of evidence that can be tracked over time. Priorities are developed through analysis of system and school data and aligned with whole-of-system strategic indicators.
- **Quorum** is the minimum number of board members required to be present for a board meeting to be conducted. For a general school board, the quorum requirement is for three or more members to be present, with at least one of the members present being a staff representative (may be the principal) and at least one member present being a parents and citizens representative. For schools in special circumstances or school-related institutions, the quorum is defined in relation to the composition of the board and is detailed in the [Disallowable Instrument](#).

- **Regulations** mean rules and administrative codes issued by government agencies at all levels (local, state and federal). While not laws, they have the force of law, since they are adopted under authority granted by statutes, and often include penalties for violations.
- **Report of Review (RoR)** is the public report of findings from a school's School Review. The RoR provides explicit point-in-time assessment of the efficacy and embeddedness of a range of practices in a school. Findings do not describe performance of student outcomes; as this is undertaken through data analysis during development of a school's SIP. Descriptors for each NSIT Domain put into functional terms the processes and practices that directly support whole-school improvement.
- **School** means a public school as defined in the [Education Act 2004](#).
- **School Board** means the board that is established under the [Education Act 2004](#) to work with the principal to develop and maintain the strategic direction and priorities for the school and to perform the functions of the board specified in the Act.
- **School Improvement Plan** is the five-year improvement agenda for a school. Prior to 2018 it was called the 'School Strategic Plan' or 'School Plan'. The SIP is a collection of two or three sharp and narrow improvement priorities.
- **Sponsorship** is the negotiated provision of funds, goods or services to schools in exchange for advertising, publicity or other benefits, in return for negotiated and approved (by an appropriate Directorate representative) benefits.
- **Staff representative** is a representative position on the board that is held by a school staff member. All staff who currently work at the school, including casual staff, are eligible to fill a staff representative position.
- **Student** means a person who participates in educational activities conducted by the school for a minimum of 12 hours per week.

Minutes Template

PLEASE ADJUST THE ATTENDEES LIST DEPENDING ON THE TYPES OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS MEMBERS FOR THE SCHOOL

{School Name}
Board Minutes
{Day Month Year}
{Venue}

Attendees

Position	Name {note which member is the chairperson}
Principal	
Parents and citizens member (P&C Association representative)	
Parents and citizens member (parent, carer or guardian representative)	
Parents and citizens member (local community representative)	
Staff member	
Staff member	
Student member {if applicable}	
Student member {if applicable}	
Appointed Member	
Board Appointed Member {if applicable}	
Board Appointed Member {if applicable}	
Invited attendee {if applicable – note which agenda items the person is attending for}	

Apologies

- {Name and position}
- {Name and position}...

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

- {Name, position, applicable agenda item, details of conflict of interest, action taken to manage the conflict of interest}...

Meeting opened {time}

Item no.	Topic	Outcomes
1	Acknowledgement of Country	[name] provided an acknowledgement of country for the meeting.
2	Minutes of previous meeting	Minutes tabled for {date of previous meeting} Decision: Minutes accepted and to be signed by chairperson
3	Business arising from previous minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> {Issue, action taken} {Issue, action taken} Action: {what, when, who, how}
4	Correspondence in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> {Type, sender's name and position, date, topic} {Type, sender's name and position, date, topic} Action: {what, when, who, how}
5	Correspondence out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> {Type, sender's name and position, date, topic} {Type, sender's name and position, date, topic} Action: {if any - what, when, who, how}
6	Chairperson's report	{Report to be attached to minutes} Issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: {what, when, who, how}
7	Principal's report	{Report to be attached to minutes} Issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: {what, when, who, how}
8	Other reports (students, staff, P&C, sub-committee)	{Report to be attached to minutes} Issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: {what, when, who, how}
9	Finance report	{Report to be attached to minutes} Issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: {what, when, who, how}

10	Extraordinary business {annual report, annual action plan, budget}	{Papers to be attached to minutes} Issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ... Action: {what, when, who, how} Decision: {what, when, who, how}
11	General business	{Papers to be attached to minutes} Issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ... Action {what, when, who, how} Decision: {what, when, who, how}
12	Next meeting	{Date month year, venue, time}
13	Meeting closed	{Time}

Schools and colleges with student board members

Schools

Alfred Deakin High School
Amaroo School
Belconnen High School
Black Mountain School
Calwell High School
Campbell High School
Canberra High School
Caroline Chisholm School
Gold Creek School
Harrison School
Kingsford Smith School
Lanyon High School
Lyneham High School
Melba Copland Secondary School
Melrose High School
Namadgi School
Stromlo High School
Telopea Park School
The Woden School
University of Canberra High School Kaleen
Wanniassa School

Colleges

Canberra College
Dickson College
Erindale College
Gungahlin College
Hawker College
Lake Tuggeranong College
Narrabundah College
University of Canberra Secondary College Lake Ginninderra