

Guidelines for Parent Council/PTA Committee Members

When you become a Parent Council/PTA committee member you take on an important role as a representative of all the parents/carers in your school. But that's not all – the success of a committee is dependent on the full participation of its members.

Although the office bearers take on individual tasks, they are not there to do all the work and it is the responsibility of all committee members to make sure that the Parent Council/PTA is running smoothly.

How do I become a committee member?

The PC/PTA constitution should detail how you may become a committee member, however this usually happens at an AGM. Parents are either asked to send in their nomination before the AGM or by a show of hands at the meeting. If you are keen to be involved with the work of the PC/PTA but would find it difficult to attend meetings due to family commitments, childcare issues or work then why not ask if you can become a *virtual member* – you could agree to respond (by email/phone/post) to issues on the agenda and any correspondence sent out by the Chair without actually being present at the meeting.

What are the main responsibilities of a committee member?

- The PC/PTA constitution will have details of the aims of the group and you should always keep these in mind when acting on behalf of the group.
- Make yourself aware of committee rules and how meetings are run. Ask about the procedures for adding items to the agenda, speaking at meetings, voting and how to call an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).
- Get to know fellow committee members and the office bearers and how the group operates.
- A committee member represents more than just themselves on the PC/PTA. Most parents join because they want to help their own child's education and school, however committee members are there to try to represent the views of **all** the parents in the school, i.e. the Parent Forum.

- Committee members may raise concerns at meetings but the Parent Council is not there to take on individual issues – either those of committee members or other parents.
- A committee member should be aware of parental issues; if several parents are concerned or want something raised at a meeting then you may ask the Chair to put it on the agenda.
- A parent member who is also a teacher should always be aware that they are there to speak on behalf of parents.
- PC/PTA members should let other parents know about the work of the committee and how they can get in touch.
- Committee members should not bring the PC/PTA into disrepute in any way. If a committee member is unhappy with committee business and/or decisions made, they should raise this with the Chair or at a meeting.
- Committee members should make themselves familiar with the diversity and make-up of the school community and make sure that all parents know about the Parent Council, eg parents whose first language is not English.

Committee meetings

- Attend meetings as often as you can and try to arrive on time.
- If you cannot attend a meeting send your apologies to either the Chair or Secretary/PC Clerk.
- Read any papers or correspondence sent out before a meeting and if you are unsure about an item on the agenda, ask someone to clarify this.
- Keep to the agenda during the meeting and try not to interrupt. Do not start a separate conversation while the committee is discussing an item.
- Take an active part in discussions but if you are unsure about the subject, ask for clarification.
- Don't be afraid to ask what something means – you are probably not the only one who needs clarification!
- Be respectful when others are speaking by treating others as you want to be treated. Indicate to the Chair if you wish to speak.
- There should be a Treasurer's report at each meeting and, as the money is **everyone's responsibility** the report should be taken seriously, listened to and questioned when appropriate.
- Make sure your opinion is heard – if you don't participate then you don't have the right to criticise decisions.
- If a vote takes place you must go with the majority decision – even if you don't agree.
- If you have voted against a decision made by the majority of the committee then you may ask for this to be reflected in the minutes.
- If AOCB is an item on the agenda this is not the point to bring up anything for immediate discussion. If you would like to raise an issue then ask for it to be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

After a meeting

- Read the minutes from a meeting as soon as possible and make the Secretary/PC Clerk aware of any errors or if your views have not been properly reflected.
- Follow up on any tasks you may have been given as soon as you can.
- It is not appropriate to publicly disagree or complain about the committee with other parents. Any concerns should be taken to the Chair/other committee members and/or discussed at a future meeting.

This may all seem rather daunting but it shouldn't be. Your involvement on your Parent Council/PTA should be a great opportunity for you to get involved with your school and learn more about your child's education.

Remember the committee will be what you and the other parents make it: if you are positive and focus on what can be achieved rather than the problems, your child and all the others at the school will benefit.

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