



Parent Association Constitution: Woodstock Educate Together National School

OVERVIEW: In line with the provisions of the Irish Constitution, the Board of Management acknowledges that parents are the primary educators of their children and strives to ensure that parents find the school an open, welcoming, inclusive place.

The Parents' associations may choose to affiliate to the National Parents' Council and should be encouraged to do so. The National Parents' Council offers training for Parent Associations on their role and will deliver this training in their school. (NPC Primary Head Office is at 12 Marlborough Court, Dublin 1. Tel 01-887 4034.)

In a spirit of collaboration and trust, parents will recognise that there are areas of school activity that belong to the professional work of the teachers. There will also be a recognition that certain areas of responsibility (e.g. finance) belong to the Board of Management.

- The parents' association should consult with the Board about fundraising for the school or school projects.
- The approval of the Board is needed before these funds are raised.
- The expenditure of these funds is by the Board of Management, in consultation with the parents' association.
- Full accounts must be maintained and presented at the parents' association AGM, in accordance with the rules of the association.
- A parents' association is entitled to raise funds for the administration and activities of the association without obtaining approval from the Board of Management.
- The Board prepares a total account of income and expenditure at the end of each school year and this is available to parents. (Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure, Clause 21)
- Any funds raised must be used for the purpose/s for which the money was collected.
- If, in exceptional circumstances, it becomes unnecessary for the Board to use all the funds collected for the purpose specified, the Board will communicate this to the parents' association and, where appropriate, the local community. In any event, the funds must be used for the school. The change of purpose for which the funds are used will be decided by the Board in consultation with the parents' association committee.

The Parents' Association and the Board of Management Partnership:

Both the Parents' Association and the Board of Management have the best interests of the child as a common goal in the running of the school. To fulfil their duties as set out in the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management and the Parents' Association need to have effective ways of communicating with one another. Ways of communicating between the Parents' Association and the Board of Management may include:



- An annual meeting, early in each school year, with a jointly planned agenda, to discuss ideas for working together, to share information and to exchange views.
- A social event where parents, teachers, and Board of Management members can meet and get to know one another.
- The Parents' Association's committee meeting agenda may include a report [when appropriate] from the parents' nominees on the Board of Management.
- Meetings between the Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Chairperson of the Parents' Association committee. The parent nominees elected by parents are not on the Board to represent parents but are there to manage the school. While they may bring a parental perspective to all meetings, their primary function is the managing of the school.

The Purpose of the Parents' Association:

The purpose of the Parents' Association is to provide a structure through which the parents and guardians of children attending Woodstock Educate Together National School can work together for the best possible education for their children. The Parents' Association will work with the Principal, staff and Board of Management to build effective partnership between home and school.

Under the Education Act, 1998 Section 26:

- (1) *The parents of students of a recognised school may establish, and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for that school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of students of that school.*
- (2) *A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, Principal, teachers and students of the school and for that purpose may-*
 - *advise the Principal or the board on any matter relating to the school and the Principal or board, as the case may be, who shall have regard to any such advice, and*
 - *Adopt a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents, in consultation with the Principal, in the operation of the school.*
- (3) *The board shall promote contact between the school, parents of students in that school and the community and shall facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to parents who wish to establish a parents' association and to a parents' association when it is established.*
- (4) *A parents' association shall, following consultation with its member:*
 - make rules governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs*
- (a) *Where a parents' association is affiliated to a national association of parents, the rules referred to in paragraph (a) shall be in accordance with guidelines issued by that national association of parents with the concurrence of the Minister.*

The Aim of the Parents' Association

The aim of the Parents' Association is to enable parents to play their part in ensuring provision of the best possible education for their children and that this is achieved through the Association's programme of activities. The Parents' Association will promote the interests of the students in co-operation with the Board of Management, Principal, teachers and students, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998.



The Work of the Parents' Association

The Parents' Association will undertake a programme of extra-curricular activities which will promote the involvement of parents and which will support pupils, parents and school staff. In planning its activities, the Parents' Association will consult with the school Principal and Board of Management.

What are the most common activities that a Parent Association might undertake?

Typical activities might include some of the following:

- providing opportunities for parents to meet informally and learn from each other's experiences
- organising events where parents, teachers and board members can meet and get to know one another
- fundraising, in consultation with the Principal and Board of Management
- supporting the Principal and staff with school events such as sports day, school trips, and other ceremonies
- organising guest speakers to address parents, this can be done jointly with parents from neighbouring schools
- working in partnership with the principal and teachers in the development and review of school policies, such as the anti-bullying policy, code of behaviour etc.
- supporting the school with the organisation of special events e.g. to include people from the local community in celebrating an anniversary or a multicultural event
- maintaining a parents' page on the school website
- circulating a Parent Association newsletter
- maintaining a Parent Association notice board in the school
- welcoming new parents both to the locality and the school
- linking with local organisations such as health boards and county councils to promote positive communication and partnership
- organising new and second-hand textbook sales
- supporting the Principal and staff with projects such as the Green Schools and Digital School initiatives
- supporting the Principal and staff with specific schemes such as shared reading
- supporting school projects that require local knowledge e.g. local history, a grandparent / parent sharing their story of life in earlier times
- providing practical assistance when requested at certain times of the school year e.g. changing classroom furniture, updating inventories of library books, school plays, educational tours etc.

<https://www.npc.ie/images/uploads/downloads/SupportingEachOther.PDF>

The Membership of the Parents' Association

All parents or guardians of children attending Woodstock Educate Together National School will be deemed to be members of the Parents' Association.



The committee of the Parents' Association

The members of the Parents' Association will elect a committee with a minimum of 6 (if only positions of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer are held, a minimum of 5 suffices). This committee will have responsibility for representing the parents of Woodstock Educate Together National School and managing the activities of the Parents' Association.

Subcommittees

Subcommittees working within the Parents' Committee can be set up for particular tasks. The subcommittees may also co-opt people to assist in their work. The subcommittees may not make decisions; they remain at all times accountable to the main committee.

The Election of the Parents' Association committee

The members of the committee will be elected each year at the AGM of the Parents' Association. Each member will be elected for one year. At the AGM all committee members must step down, but they can be re-elected as long as they continue to be eligible to serve, that is as long as they continue to be a parent or guardian of a child in the school. No member of the committee will hold the same officer position for more than three consecutive years.

Parents' representatives elected to the Board of Management are automatically members of the committee, but will not hold an officer position on the Parents' Association committee. These two members do not step down yearly but are replaced by incoming board of management Parent Nominees. Any member (parent or guardian) can put their name forward or nominate another member with that person's permission for a committee position. Where at all possible the PA will attempt to gather a fair cross-section of parents from each class in order to achieve a good balance of opinion and reference point.

The Work of the committee of the Parents' Association

The Parents' Association committee will be responsible for ensuring that all parents are consulted on issues which are pertinent to the entire parent body. The Parents' Association committee may advise the Principal and Board of Management on any matters relating to the school in accordance with the Education Act, 1998, 26.- (2)(a)

- The committee is the team that will manage the tasks of the association on behalf of the parent body (the members).
- The committee will be responsible for seeing that activities are run in an efficient and effective way.
- The committee will consult with the school Principal and Board of Management when planning the programme of activities for any particular year.



- The committee will make decisions as to PA involvement in school and 3rd party activities as a group.
- At the annual general meeting (AGM) the committee will report to the parent body (the members) about its work.
- The committee will manage and account for any funds collected or expended by the Parents' Association.

Committee Meetings

The first meeting of the committee should focus on:

- The election of officers,
- The handing over of information, accounts and responsibilities from the previous committee
- The preparation of the calendar of events and activities for the year.

It is suggested that this meeting should occur within 2 weeks of the AGM. It is also suggested that the principal be invited to present suggestions for activities and items for the PA to be involved in. After the first meeting the PA should meet at least once a term.

The proposed agenda for the next meeting should be circulated to committee members by the chairperson in adequate time before the meeting for additions and finalized by the time of the meeting. When there is not unanimous agreement on an issue a vote should be called on the basis of a 50% +1 quorum and the results recorded in the minutes.

Are there rules regarding the finances of the Parent Association?

Parent Association and Board of Management finances require both openness and accountability. The rules governing both Board of Management and Parent Association finances are clearly laid out in the Board of Management Information Manual 2019-2023(pg. 41) as issued by the Department of Education and Science. Regarding the Parent Association finances the Information Manual stipulates that:

- a Parent Association is entitled to raise funds for the administration and activities of the Association
- full accounts must be maintained and presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Parent Association
- the Parent Association should consult with the Board about fundraising for the school or school projects
- the approval of the Board is needed prior to the raising of such funds
- the expenditure of these funds is by the Board of Management in consultation with the Parent Association
- the Board prepares a total account of income and expenditure at the end of each year and this is available to parents, Principals and Parent Associations (A Guide for Best Practice 13)



- any funds raised must be used for the purpose(s) for which the money was collected
- if, in exceptional circumstances, it is not necessary for the Board to use all of the funds collected for the purpose specified, the Board will communicate this to the Parent Association and, where appropriate, the local community.

<https://www.npc.ie/images/uploads/downloads/SupportingEachOther.PDF>

Therefore, The Woodstock Parents' Association committee will finance the activities of the Parents' Association through fundraising.

A Treasurer will be appointed from among the committee members and will be responsible for keeping account of the income and expenditure of the Parents' Association finances. The Treasurer will give a statement of income and expenditure at each committee meeting. A written statement of income and expenditure will be given at the AGM and a copy will be forwarded to the Board of Management for their information. The Parents' Association will keep a bank account in its name. Each cheque issued requires two signatures. The Treasurer and at least one other assigned member of the committee must sign all cheques drawn on the account.

Fundraising for the School

Fundraising for the school by the Parents' Association will be done with the prior agreement of the Board of Management and the principal. The Parents' Association committee will agree with the Board of Management as to the specific purposes for which funds are to be raised by the Parents' Association.

Changing the Constitution

Changes to the constitution can be made at the AGM or, if for an urgent reason, an EGM can be called for that specific purpose. Proposals to change the constitution must be submitted in writing to the Parents' Association committee. The Parents' Association committee will then circulate these proposals to all parents before the AGM/EGM. All parents of children in the school at the meeting are eligible to vote on the proposals.

The Structure of the Committee

The committee at its first meeting should elect from its members the officers of the committee. The roles of the officers are as follows:

The Chairperson

Lead and guide the committee in planning and delivering on their activities. This should involve:

- Chairing meetings



- Helping the committee to have a clear vision and clear goals
- Keeping the work of the Parents' Association to agreed targets
- Ensuring all members are respected, listened to and are encouraged to have their say
- Facilitating people to work well together ensuring that the work of the committee is shared.
- Reviewing the work of the committee
- Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of their roles within the committee
- Delegate the work of the committee to ensure all work is not the responsibility of one or two people
- Work closely with the Secretary to plan the agendas and meetings
- Approve each edition of meeting minutes
- Encourage the committee members to be prepared for the meetings
- Ensure meetings start and finish at the agreed times
- Make sure that, as each item is finished, the group is clear about what has been decided
- Ensure that all decisions are taken democratically and with respect for everyone's opinions
- Check on responsibilities taken on by members of the committee and make sure they have been clearly understood and allocated
- Summarise all decisions at the end of the meeting
- Ensure that at the end of term of office all relevant documentation is passed on to the incoming Chairperson

The Secretary

The role of the Secretary of the Parents' Association committee is to:

- Take minutes at each meeting
- File all correspondence and minutes safely
- Minutes should be brief and should be a record of decisions made and actions to be taken; they may also record a brief outline of issues discussed
- Agree the agenda for committee meetings with the Chairperson. It is important that all committee members have a right to have items included on the agenda, therefore they must be given adequate time to pass these items on to the Secretary or Chairperson
- Make sure all committee members have the agenda prior to the meetings so they can be adequately prepared
- Make sure all committee members receive a copy of the minutes of meetings, including committee members who had been unable to attend
- Appropriately administer incoming and outgoing correspondence
- Ensure the minutes are approved at each meeting. It is important at committee meetings that the minutes are agreed by those that



attended to be a true and accurate record of what happened. Once this has been agreed by the committee the Chairperson should sign the minutes for the committee's records. This process is especially useful if there is any confusion in the future regarding any decisions made.

- To publish the minutes after being signed off by the chairperson on the school website.
- Assist the Chairperson with clarification of decisions made at meetings.
- To maintain the accuracy of all documentation and publications in both print and electronic media. To ensure that all posters, notes home and web site postings are accurate and timely. Endeavour to insure all published materials reflect well on the PA and the school in general.
- Ensure that at the end of term of office all relevant documentation is passed on to the incoming Secretary

The Treasurer

The role of the Treasurer of the Parents' Association committee is to:

- Lodge and record all financial transactions
- Manage and maintain books/record of income and expenditure
- Give monthly reports on the Parents' Association finances to the Parents' Association committee
- Issue receipts for all financial transactions
- Ensure that the committee has the necessary information to understand the Parents' Association's financial needs
- Advise on how the resources can best be used to fulfil the aims and work plan of the committee
- Liaise with a bank or other financial institutions on behalf of the Parents' Association
- Present a full account of the year's income and expenditure at the Parents' Association AGM. A copy of these records will also be submitted to the Board of Management for their information
- Ensure that at the end of term of office all relevant documentation is passed on to the incoming Treasurer
- To safeguard all members of the Parents' Association two people should be responsible for signing cheques i.e. there should be two signatures required on each cheque. The signatories are the Treasurer with either the Chairperson or Secretary.
- The Treasurer must complete and submit a form to the bank to validate the names of those who are entitled to sign cheques; this must be done each year when there is a change of personnel on the committee.

Purpose of Parent Association Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for the effective partnership between the Parent Association and Woodstock ETNS in line with the



Education Act 1998. This Policy is based on best practice framework that has been jointly developed by the National Parents' Council - Primary (NPC-P) and the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN).

The Policy supports an ethos of transparency and openness between all members of our school community.