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**Bulletin 12**

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### **GUIDELINES FOR BOARD of MANAGEMENT MINUTES**

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance to Boards in respect of the content, preparation, presentation and retention of minutes of Board of Management meetings. The guidelines are recommended best practice, in compliance with the Articles of Management and legal obligations. Attention is also drawn to Chapter 6 of *A Manual for Boards of Management of Voluntary Secondary Schools*

Detailed advice is provided in respect of content to be recorded and how that is written up as a minute of the meeting. As a guide there is a sample agenda included together with a sample set of minutes. In the sample minutes each item is numerically annotated for ease of reference but this is not a requirement, it is simply a recommendation. The introduction provides an overview of the purpose of the minutes, the importance of accuracy in minutes, the retention of minutes and the responsibilities of the Principal in writing the minutes.

The writing of minutes is a critically important task as the minutes are the official record of the proceedings and actions of a Board of Management. When signed by the Chairperson, the minutes adopted by the Board are prima facie evidence of what transpired at the Board meeting and carry significant weight with courts, investigating agencies, the Department of Education and Skills and the patron/trustees. Hence it is important that the minutes are an accurate record of the business transacted by the Board. They provide evidence of the Board's conscientious compliance with its many statutory duties and its commitment to meeting its responsibilities to the educational stakeholders.

Separately, the Board is a body corporate and that means that the Board must speak and act as one. Where discussions of issues is summarised in the minutes, it is unnecessary to personalise it by referring to the views of individuals.

The guidelines address these issues in the attached Appendix

Ferdia Kelly,

General Secretary.

15<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

## APPENDIX

### Guidelines for Board of Management Minutes

Members of the Board of Management should refer to Chapter 6 of *A Manual for Boards of Management of Voluntary Secondary Schools*

#### 1) Introduction

Minutes are the official record of the proceedings and actions of a Board of Management. When signed by the Chairperson, the minutes adopted by the Board are prima facie evidence of what transpired at the Board meeting and carry significant weight with courts, investigating agencies, the Department of Education and Skills and the patron/trustees. Hence it is important that the minutes are an accurate record of the business transacted by the Board.

Minutes that are clear, factual and accurate are essential for the general effectiveness of Board of Management meetings. They provide evidence of the Board's conscientious compliance with its many statutory duties and its commitment to meeting its responsibilities to the educational stakeholders. For example, minutes that reflect the Board's role in the formulation and approval of school policies and include regular financial reports, approval of the annual budget and annual statement of accounts are testimony to the Board's attention to its obligations in these areas.

The Principal as Secretary to the Board of Management is responsible for writing and presenting the minutes. Given the Principal's level of involvement in the meeting it is permissible for the Board, under Article of Management, 11(b) to appoint a paid official as a note-taker, to assist the Principal in the compilation of minutes. However, such a minute secretary should not attend a meeting called to consider placing a person on administrative leave under the Child Protection Procedures. Minutes in this instance would be taken by the Principal.

A hard copy of the minutes should be permanently retained by the Principal/Secretary, Board of Management in a secure place.

#### 2) Content of Minutes

Minutes of ordinary Board of Management meetings include the following (not intended to be exhaustive):

- i. Date and location of meeting.
- ii. Attendance – names of those in attendance.
- iii. Apologies for inability to attend – names.
- iv. Adoption of the agenda.
- v. Adoption of minutes of previous meeting

Before adoption and signing of the minutes, the Chairperson checks that Board members are satisfied that they are an accurate record of what transpired at the previous meeting. Proposed amendments should refer only to matters of fact, decisions, or omissions of matters of substance and **not** views that may have been expressed.

The proposer and seconder should have attended the previous Board meeting.

- vi. Matters arising from minutes – reports on action points identified at previous meeting that are not included on the agenda.
- vii. Correspondence to the Board and agreement on responses to this correspondence where relevant – Response(s) to correspondence initiated by the Board.
- viii. Finance – Finance sub-committee report - summary of income and expenditure to date and comparison with budgetary provision – reports on, or approval for, non-routine items of expenditure – fundraising initiatives – capital expenditure – insurance issues etc.
- ix. Principal's report – child protection report (number of cases); school activities e.g. tours, extra-curricular activities, parent-teacher meetings, school retreats, school immersion programmes, parental involvement, local community involvement etc.
- x. Principal's business – staff matters, recruitment of staff, interview panels, student disciplinary issues, parental complaints/appeals etc.
- xi. School Development Planning – formulation and approval of new policies/ review of existing policies, matters relating to ethos, appraisal and review of curricular and extra-curricular provision, employment of Croke Park hours in subject/course planning, school self-evaluation etc
- xii. Committee reports
- xiii. Report from AMCSS regional meeting
- xiv. Any other business
- xv. Summary of action points – What is to be done? By whom? When?
- xvi. **Agreed report** – identification of matters that may be reported to staff and parents' association (and possibly to the student council); determine which matters are confidential to the Board of Management. It is recommended that the Principal should draw up the Agreed Report in consultation with a nominated member of the board. Also, it is recommended that the report be presented within 48 hours of the meeting
- xvii. Date for next meeting

### 3) **Emergency and Special Meetings of the Board**

Emergency and specially convened meetings usually have a single item on the agenda and minutes of such meetings should be presented at the next ordinary meeting of the Board. Article of Management 13 sets out the procedure for calling a Special Meeting while Article 25 provides for the calling of an Emergency Meeting.

### 4) **Writing of Minutes**

- i. Minutes should be clear, intelligible and factual.
- ii. The minutes provide a clear summary of matters discussed, decisions reached and actions that are to be undertaken by the Principal, Chairperson, other Board members or committees.
- iii. Decisions, where possible, should be by consensus but where a vote is taken, the exact wording of the motion or proposition before the Board should be recorded. The result of a vote should simply be recorded as ‘carried’ or ‘defeated’.
- iv. If individual Board members wish to put on record their opposition to a resolution that has been adopted by majority decision of the Board, this may be done. **Note:** This does **not** lessen in any way the members’ duty to support the Board’s position. When the Board has spoken, either through majority approval of written policies or adopted resolutions, all members are obliged to support the Board’s position. Being a **body corporate** means a Board must speak and act as **one**.
- v. Minutes are a record of what was **done** at a meeting, not what was **said**.
- vi. Individual opinions, interpretations of what was said or judgmental phrases such as ‘heated discussion’ or ‘interesting report’ are omitted. A good meeting often brings together people who have interesting ideas and a lot to say. Sometimes this means that debates can get contentious, even heated. Neutral, objective minute-taking is all the more important in the face of controversy. No emotive language!
- vii. Where discussion of issues is summarised in the minutes, it is unnecessary to personalise it by referring to the views of individuals.
- viii. Expressions of thanks, appreciation or congratulations (e.g. regarding school stage productions, success in sporting competitions, staff involvement in extra-curricular activities etc.) that are approved by the Board are included in the minutes.
- ix. With regard to WSE/MLL or individual subject inspection reports, it is important to record in the minutes that these reports were discussed by the Board together with whatever action was agreed to implement the recommendations made in the reports.
- x. The Principal’s report on unannounced visits of the inspectorate and outcomes from these visits should also be recorded in the minutes.
- xi. Minutes should refer discreetly to matters reported to the Board that may have legal or financial consequences or may become the subject of appeal.
- xii. The lay-out or presentation of the minutes should facilitate reference to matters that may be raised at the next meeting or future meetings. Headings should correspond to, and be numbered in accordance with the list of items on the agenda (See sample agenda and sample minutes).
- xiii. At this point it is worth repeating that minutes should be clear, intelligible and factual.

5) **Sample Agenda for a Board of Management meeting**

**Agenda**

**Opening prayer/reflection**

1. Apologies
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Minutes
4. Matters Arising
5. Correspondence
6. Financial Report
7. Principal's Report
8. Principal's Business
9. School Development Planning
  - i. Review of Admissions Policy
  - ii. Review of Homework Policy (See accompanying draft)
  - iii. School self-evaluation
10. AMCSS Regional Meeting
11. Committee reports
12. Any other business
13. Agreed report
14. Date of next meeting

## Sample Minutes

### **Minutes of Board of Management Meeting, Emmet High School, 18th October 2012**

Attendance: Margaret Traynor (Chairperson), Michael Barrett, Joan Cummins, Kevin Egan, Peter Howard, Mary Meehan, John O' Brien, Catherine O' Donnell (Principal/Secretary) and Eileen Hayes (recording secretary). Apologies: Helen Dilger.

**1. The agenda as circulated was adopted.**

**2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012 were taken as read. In response to the chairperson's question as to their accuracy, Peter Howard indicated that the lowest quotation for repairs to the roof of the school (par. 4.2. of minutes) should read as €9,700 and not €7,900. The minutes were then adopted as amended – proposed by Kevin Egan and seconded by Joan Cummins – and signed by the Chairperson.

**3. Matters arising**

**3.1 Roof Repairs**

The Principal reported that the repairs to the roof had been deferred to the mid-term break. As the works were being funded by the Building Unit of the DES, payment would be issued only on the basis of the Architect's certification of satisfactory completion.

**3.2 Fundraising Initiatives**

The Parents' Association are organising a Cake Sale in December, a Fashion Show in February and the usual Fair in mid-May. The Board approved these projects.

**4. Correspondence**

**4.1 DES**

DES informed the school that 8 extra special needs hours per week were being provided for the current school year. The Principal recommended that these hours should be shared between two members of the special needs/resource department who were currently on contracts of 15 hours per week. The Board formally approved the extension of these fixed term contracts to 19 hours.

**4.2 Education Office**

Regarding plans for participation in the 2013 Immersion Programme. The Principal is discussing this with the RE team and the co-ordinator of TY. The Principal was of the opinion that, given the amount of preparation required and the costs involved, the school should limit its involvement to every second year. It was agreed that the Education Office would be informed that the school will respond after the November meeting.

#### **4.3 Sports Hall**

The local soccer club requested use of the Sports Hall for a fundraising 24 hour soccer marathon on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November. Many of the players involved are pupils. The Board acceded to the request subject to appropriate insurance being in place and that light, heat and cleaning costs would be met. The issue of Garda vetting for adults involved in the running of the event was also addressed.

### **5. Financial Report**

5.1 The Finance Committee Chairperson, Peter Howard circulated an income/expenditure report. The figures were in line with what was anticipated – the first DES capitation grant had been credited to the school account while voluntary contributions, as expected, were c. 5% down on last year's figures for the same period.

5.2 The draft Annual Statement of Accounts for the school year ended 31 August 2012 is due within the next 10 days. The Finance Committee will review the statement and it will be circulated to Board members in advance of the next meeting.

5.3 As in previous years, the Finance Committee would be supporting the Parents' Association fundraising initiatives. A meeting between the Finance Committee and representatives of the Parents' Association is scheduled for early November.

### **6. Principal's Report**

6.1 The Principal presented a summary of grades received by pupils in the Junior Certificate to the Board. The grades compared favourably with those of previous years and the national average in all subjects.

6.2 Notice had been received from the Inspectorate that a school inspection in Geography would take place on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> October. The verbal report on this inspection should be available for the next Board meeting.

6.3 Activities arranged for Transition Year pupils included visits to Dáil Éireann, a walking tour of medieval Dublin and a trip to the Burren. On completion of these activities, the pupils write an evaluation report on their experiences. The principal confirmed that written permission would be secured for all students participating and that the school's policy on out of school trips would be carefully adhered to.

6.4 The Parent-Teacher meeting for third year classes had taken place on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> October. There was a very good attendance and feedback from parents was very positive. The Parent-Teacher meeting for sixth year classes is scheduled for Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> October.

6.5 Pupils are involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities – hurling, hockey, basketball, badminton and preparations are underway for the annual stage production, scheduled for early February.

- 6.6 The Sports Hall is fully booked - Monday to Thursday evenings 5.30 to 9.00 p.m. - under the usual conditions, by various local sporting organisations.

## 7. Principal's Business

### 7.1 Posts of Responsibility

The moratorium on appointments to posts of responsibility meant that the school was not in a position to appoint a Year Head for 6<sup>th</sup> Year on the retirement of Mr. Heffernan. The duties associated with this position were now being shared by the Principal and Deputy Principal which has further increased their workload.

### 7.2 Bullying Issue

A parent had made a serious bullying complaint on behalf of her son against a particular third year pupil. After thorough investigation it was accepted that this complaint was genuine. As the perpetrator of the bullying had been the subject of similar complaints during the previous school year, he was suspended for three days following a meeting with the boy and his parents. Also, his parents have committed themselves to full cooperation with the school in ensuring that there would be no repetition of this conduct. Both victim and perpetrator of the bullying had a number of sessions with the Guidance Counsellor and the perpetrator had now apologised to the victim. The Board requested that a full report on the matter be kept on record.

### 7.3 Suspensions

The Principal reported that three other pupils had been suspended for one day since the last Board meeting. These suspensions were for various types of misconduct and lack of cooperation.

The issue of appeals against suspensions was raised. It was the Board's view that such an appeal should be considered at the next ordinary meeting of the Board and, if successful, the record of the suspension would be removed from the pupil's file. However, it was agreed that advice on this stance would be sought from the JMB before the next meeting.

## 8. School Development Planning

### 8.1 Annual review of Admissions Policy

The Principal indicated that in a small number of instances incorrect home addresses had been furnished on application forms to circumvent the 'proximity of home to school' criterion. The addresses of grandparents' had been entered on the application form. After some discussion, it was agreed that the following would be inserted in the section of the Admissions' Policy that referred to 'proximity of home to school' – **'a current utility bill showing the name of one or both parents/guardians must be returned with this Application Form'**.

### 8.2 Review of Homework Policy

The draft forwarded to Board had been discussed by the Students' Council, the Parents' Council and the teaching staff. All of these parties were now satisfied with the revised policy.

The issue of checking the homework notebooks was raised as some pupils were careless about entering assignments. It was agreed, after an exchange of views, that this was internal school matter for the Principal and teaching staff.

The revised Homework Policy was then adopted and was signed by the Chairperson. The revised policy will be published on the school website.

8.3 Croke Park Hours

The Principal informed the Board that a significant portion of the 'Croke Park hours' are being devoted to the self-evaluation process that commenced two years ago. Staff is now being guided by the new School Evaluation Guidelines.

**9. Report on AMCSS regional meeting**

- 9.1 The Principal and Chairperson had attended this meeting and summarised the issues that were discussed. Particular attention was given to proposals that all PGDE students would follow a two year course and that schools would have a more structured involvement in the training and induction of these students into the teaching profession.

**10. Committee Reports**

- 10.1 The Advisory Board of Studies was looking at various aspects of our curricular provision at present. There was a strong view that Technology should be introduced to the curriculum and the resource implications of this innovation were now being examined.

**11. Any other business**

- 11.1 The chairperson with the approval of the members asked the Principal to convey the congratulations of the Board to the teaching staff and pupils on the excellent results achieved in the Junior Certificate.  
The Board's appreciation of the very generous input to extra-curricular activities on the part of many staff members should also be communicated.

**12. Agreed Report**

Matters to be included in the Agreed Report were agreed

**13. Date of next meeting and conclusion of business**

The next meeting was scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012.