



GUIDELINES FOR THE SECRETARY

There are very few rules governing how Parent Councils and PTAs/PSAs operate (unless they have charitable status). However, it is good practice to have someone to take on the role of Secretary. Some Parent Councils opt to pay a Clerk instead, and some have both! A Clerk can be paid for with the money a PC receives from the local authority. The Clerk is not a member of the PC and has no voting rights.

The main roles of the Secretary

The Secretary can be any member of the Parent Council/committee. The main role of a Secretary is to support the Chairperson to ensure the smooth running of the PC/PTA and to maintain effective communication links between PC/committee members and between the PC/PTA and the school. Their role may also include:

- Ensuring meetings are well organised and minuted.
- Maintaining records and administration – these should be kept in a file, or online storage platform such as Dropbox or GoogleDocs to be handed on to the next Secretary.
- If the PC/PTA has charitable status, they should make sure legal requirements are met.
- Handling communication and correspondence.

Preparing for a meeting

- Arrange a suitable venue for the meeting and if necessary take out the let for the school. Alternatively, set up your meeting on an online platform, like Zoom or GoogleMeet.
- Check all PC/committee members and parents have plenty of notice of the meeting and let people know how they can get the link for joining an online meeting.
- Help to set the agenda with the Chair and make sure that any reports/papers including minutes are sent to PC/committee members well in advance of the meeting with a reminder of any actions they have agreed to take.
- If meeting in person, consider bringing some spare printed copies of the agenda and of the minutes of the last meeting to the meeting.
- Request the headteacher's report for circulation in advance of the meeting.

At the meeting

- The Secretary should arrive/log in in good time with all the relevant papers.
- Circulate an attendance sheet for everyone to fill in or take a note of attendees from the Participants list of the online meeting (for your minutes). Ensure Parent Council/committee members are aware their names will be made public and noted against action points. Other people attending the meeting should be informed their names will be included in the minutes. If anyone requests anonymity, initials could be used.
- Make sure previous minutes are agreed as an accurate record. Take notes of the meeting and record the key points and any decisions and actions. Remember these notes will be used to help write the minutes. If you have access to a tablet/laptop, you can type the minutes during the meeting.
- A Secretary may be given the task of reporting on actions or matters arising from the previous minutes and should read/note any correspondence that has been received
- The Chair should summarise any discussion before a decision is made and the Secretary should clarify this for the minutes before moving onto the next item on the agenda. This helps to make sure that all PC/committee members understand what has been decided.
- Let the Chairperson know if an agenda item has been missed or is over-running.

After the meeting

- As soon as possible prepare a draft of the minutes and discuss with the Chairperson before sending to other committee members and the Headteacher .
- If the headteacher's report features in the minutes, it can be a courtesy to show them the draft minutes for an accuracy check too. However, these are your parent group's minutes of your PC/PTA's meeting and should not be amended by non-PC/committee members, except for inaccuracies, or potential breaches of confidentiality etc.
- Send a reminder of the action points or a copy of the draft minutes ASAP as a prompt to the PC/committee members.
- Follow up on any correspondence as soon as possible.

Writing the minutes

Minutes are an 'official record' of a meeting and it is a good idea to write them as soon as possible. Minutes record the decisions reached, actions to follow up and who has taken on the actions.

Here are some useful tips:

- List those present (from your attendance sheet/participant list) and note any apologies. The Parent Forum should be able to identify who is on the Parent Council, and the minutes should be emailed to PC/PTA/PSA members and published on a notice board, school website or Facebook page. Connect has a template for minutes.

- Note down who has agreed to actions and include a column in the minutes for agreed actions with names. Minutes should be clear and concise and written in neutral language. They should not record everything that was said but they need to show the gist of differing opinions without the feelings behind them. If a long discussion takes place, then the main points could be bullet-pointed.
- When it comes to *minuting* items of business, it is sensible to record the topic, the main points of discussion and any decisions. It is not a good idea to record who said what unless the name of the speaker is important, for example an invited guest. If a discussion takes place, then it is usual to write something like *there was wide-ranging discussion in which the following points were made*. The main points from the discussion should then be bullet-pointed. It is very important to record any decisions and actions, who has agreed to carry out any tasks, and when these should be completed.
- Any parent/carer can ask to see the minutes and accounts for a Parent Council. Many Parent Councils share these on a website or social media.
- Minutes will be in draft form until they have been approved at the next meeting; this can be done informally with a show of hands or more formally by asking someone to propose and second them. You can share the minutes with the Parent Forum in advance of them being approved, so long as they are clearly marked DRAFT.
- The minutes should be a true record of the meeting.

And finally ...

- A Secretary should not be over-burdened with PC/committee business. It can be a good idea to split the role by having one person to take minutes and another to handle correspondence, arrange meetings, etc. It is a good idea to foster links with the school's office staff to make sure that any correspondence is passed on. Ask for a folder/file/in-tray for your parent group and make sure the next secretary knows about it when you handover to them.
- The role of the Secretary should be agreed by all the PC/committee members and explained clearly to anyone taking up the post. Short job descriptions can help with this!

We have a template agenda for ordinary meetings with guidance on taking minutes [below](#).

Find our guidelines for Annual General Meetings in the [Running Committees and Meetings Pack](#)

You are welcome to use information from this resource. However, if you do, please acknowledge Connect. We welcome your comments and feedback.

February 2022

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GUIDELINES FOR AGENDA ITEMS AND MINUTES.

Name of Group _____ Date of Meeting __

Agenda item	Detail	Decision	Action
<p>Welcome and attendees</p>	<p>Chair welcomes all those attending, including any visitors/guests.</p> <p>Secretary/Clerk records the names of all those attending in the minutes. Circulating a 'sign-in' attendance sheet is helpful. Check the meeting is quorate – are there enough people attending to allow the meeting to go ahead? – the number required should be written into the constitution.</p> <p>The Parent Forum should be able to identify who is on the Parent Council, and the minutes should be published on a notice board, school website or Facebook page. Ensure that Parent Council members are aware their names will be publicised and noted against action points.</p> <p>Other people attending the meeting should be informed that their names will be included in the minutes. If they request anonymity, initials could be used.</p>		
<p>Apologies</p>	<p>Secretary/Clerk records the names of those who have said they can't attend and have sent apologies.</p>		

<p>Minutes of the last meeting – for approval</p>	<p>The minutes of the last meeting should be approved with any inaccuracies corrected at this stage</p> <p>Minutes of each meeting should be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting and PC/committee members should be encouraged to read these and follow up on any actions they have been given. Minutes are in draft until approved at the next meeting (or amendments approved). Minutes should also be displayed within the school and, if possible, on websites/social networking sites.</p> <p>The Chair should ask for approval of these minutes by a show of hands or getting people to propose and second. This can be done section by section or as a whole.</p>		
<p>Matters arising</p>	<p>A brief update on anything discussed at the last meeting or to confirm that something has been done as agreed. However, any major item discussed at the last meeting and still ongoing should be on the agenda as a separate item</p>	<p>If matter has not been dealt with, set a deadline for completion or delegate the task to someone else.</p> <p>Matters that arise more than once should either be put on the next agenda as a separate item or discarded.</p>	<p>Person to take this forward.</p> <p>If necessary, Chair/Secretary to take appropriate action.</p>

Treasurer's/ Financial Report	<p>This should be on every agenda. Refer to Connect's Money Matters for Parent Groups and Treasurers.</p> <p>The treasurer should report in writing on any income/ expenditure and give the current bank balance backed up with evidence of the funds in the bank account. If the treasurer cannot attend the meeting then a written report and copy bank statement should be sent to the Chairperson.</p>		
Separate items of business (each item is given a different slot on the agenda)	<p>Each topic should be listed as a separately numbered item with the most important one at the top</p> <p>The Chair should give more time to the important items on the agenda. It is a good idea to time agenda items to keep discussions on track. The most important items should be at the top of the agenda.</p>	Note any decisions made.	Name of person/ s allocated tasks
Sub-committee reports (if any)			
Headteacher's report	<p>The Parent Council/PTA can invite the Headteacher or their representative to report but this item should not dominate the meeting. If the Headteacher has a lot to report, ask them to send information in advance of the meeting so everyone has a chance to read it and be ready with questions.</p>	Note any matters that should be taken forward as an agenda item for the next Parent Council meeting.	
Correspondence	<p>The Secretary/PC Clerk should briefly mention any correspondence received and whether action is required.</p>		

AOCB (Any other competent business)	No major items should be brought up at this point. This is an opportunity to make suggestions for the next agenda, send apologies, etc		
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