



"Serving Parents
for 60 Years"

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OFFICE BEARERS & THEIR ROLES

The organisational arrangements and constitutions of both PTAs and Parent Councils can vary from school to school; there is no one prescribed model for either body. Both can operate as informally or as formally as members want, but they usually work on three levels:

- **All the parents at the school**

For the PTA, all the parents – along with the teachers – form the membership of the PTA and it is they, through the AGM or EGM, who make the formal decisions about the organisation; the PTA Committee runs the day-to-day business on their behalf.

The situation is very similar for the Parent Council. All the parents make up the Parent Forum who, through an AGM or EGM make the formal decisions about the organisation. The Parent Council runs the day-to-day business on behalf of the Parent Forum.

- **PTA Committee/Parent Council** is responsible for the day-to-day running of the group.
- The **office bearers** are responsible for ensuring that all decisions are carried out and that money is handled properly.

Although many people think of the PTA Committee or Parent Council as the important group, they are ultimately responsible to the wider parent body for everything that they do; they have to report back to them at least once every year at the AGM. The fact that hardly anyone ever turns up to an AGM, does not change this relationship and it is very important that the PTA Committee/Parent Council always remembers that it acts on behalf of the members/Parent Forum.

For their part, the office bearers are not a random selection of people with posh titles. They are there because there are actual jobs to be done: the jobs define the office bearers, not the other way round, and it is worth following proper procedures both to ensure that the PTA/Parent Council runs properly and to protect the individual office bearers from charges of mismanagement.

In general the jobs can be described as follows:

- ensuring that everything runs smoothly and that all decisions are carried out – the job of the Chairperson
- looking after all the paperwork such as the minutes, agendas, correspondence and letters sent to parents – the job of the Secretary
- looking after the money, keeping track of income and expenditure, dealing with the bank/building society – the job of the Treasurer

Whilst it is possible to divide the jobs up differently, have two people do one job or, with Parent Councils, have a paid clerk to carry out the secretarial and treasurer's duties, on the simple model of one office bearer doing one job, the office bearers' roles are as follows.

The Chairperson

By law, the Chairperson of a Parent Council must always be a parent with a child at the school. This is not a legal requirement for PTAs, but it is good practice. S/he is ultimately responsible for seeing that the organisation runs efficiently. S/he has to ensure that all the necessary organisational decisions are taken for any activities. S/he is responsible for calling committee meetings, setting the agenda and ensuring that the meeting gets through the agenda. It's a good idea to identify in advance what the major items are, what decisions have to be made and then make sure that these items get adequate time. If necessary, the Chairperson should draw the discussion to a close and either ask for a decision or agree that the item will be continued at the next meeting. S/he also decides when it is necessary to have a formal vote and has a casting vote in the event of a tie.

The Chairperson can call an extra meeting as long as everyone on the committee is informed of the date, time and venue of the meeting.

Whilst not directly responsible for the paperwork, the Chairperson should ensure that it is being managed properly, that minutes and agendas are accurate and out on time, that all correspondence is being shown to the committee and that any agreed letters are being written; s/he has to check that all necessary school lets are being taken out; that the Treasurer is managing the money properly, presenting an accurate report on the finances at each meeting and making the necessary arrangements for the annual audit.

The Chairperson has the same responsibility for the AGM that s/he has for committee meetings: s/he has to see that notices are sent out on time and the business of the meeting is got through.

The Secretary

The Secretary can be any member of the committee (or the paid clerk for the Parent Council). S/he is responsible for taking and writing up the minutes for committee meetings and the AGM. S/he should show these to the Chairperson for immediate correction before sending them out to the rest of the committee. These draft minutes are then corrected and formally approved at the next meeting. The Secretary is responsible for all correspondence, both incoming and outgoing, including any notices that are sent out to parents. S/he is responsible for ensuring that the committee is advised of all correspondence and for keeping PTA/PA records. This means keeping a file with the agendas, minutes and correspondence in it. The Secretary usually makes the detailed arrangements for any meeting, including taking out the lets, and is the contact person for any visitor.

The Treasurer (see SPTC leaflet on *Money Matters*)

The Treasurer can be anyone on the committee (or the paid clerk for the Parent Council). S/he is responsible for handling the money, organising arrangements for counting money at a fundraising event, maintaining the financial records and paying all bills, including any expenses incurred by other committee members. (It is good practice to require receipts). S/he usually holds the cheque book or similar and deals with the bank or building society. S/he should present a financial report at each committee meeting, detailing any income and expenditure since the last meeting and the current balance.

The Treasurer is responsible for organising an annual audit of the accounts and whilst this does not have to be done by an accountant, it should be done by someone who is good with numbers e.g. someone who works in a bank or building society. However, s/he cannot be a member of the committee or a relative of a committee member. Finally, the Treasurer has to make a financial report to the members at the AGM. This report should be put up in the school for everyone to see.

Other leaflets available

1. What is a PTA?
2. What is Parent Council?
3. A Model Constitution (PTAs)
4. A Model Constitution (Parent Councils)
5. Charities, Constitutions & Confusion
6. Money matters
7. The Qualifications Mystery Tour!
8. Advice on Disclosure Checks

ABOUT S.P.T.C.

You may be interested to know that our membership insurance scheme covers:

- Public Liability
- Personal Accident
- Fidelity Guarantee
- Employer's Liability
- All-Risks for equipment purchased for the school
- Short-term all-risks insurance for special events.

June 2007

Scottish Parent Teacher Council, the independent voice of parents is a national organisation. It has been serving parents' groups in schools for 60 years. For further information and membership forms
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