



## POLICY No 001

Version 1

**Policy Generation: Initiation; Approval; Implementation; Review**

### Introduction

It is stated often in independent school's literature that the Board of Governors is the guardian of the school's Mission Statement. Indeed, it is the school's Mission Statement that sets out, in principle, all that the school is, and all that the school aspires to be. While many Mission Statements are worthy documents, and have often been laboured over intensively by the Board of Governors, the School Management and the Staff, it is often difficult to determine a clear link between the School's Mission and what actually happens both inside and outside of the classrooms.

This document aims to set out in clear language the link between the School Mission Statement, its Constitution, its Policy Documents, and the decision making and action that arise there from.

If the Mission Statement sets out clearly what the school is, and states what its values are, and what it aspires to be (its vision) that needs to be given meaning in more detail by the school's Constitution. The school's Constitution is, if you like, the same as the memorandum and articles of association of a company. The Constitution sets out in broad terms the rules of Governance, and the broad general direction of the School.

The Constitution, once again, while a most worthwhile and noble document needs to be taken one step further and translated into workable policies that will guide and inform the decision making and Executive action in the school itself.

Further to the generation of these policies, it is also necessary to review and assess the efficacy of the policies on a regular basis to ensure that they are still relevant, and indeed that they are being put into practice.

Hence this document will cover the following four areas:

- Policy Initiation
- Approval
- Implementation
- Review

### 1. Initiation

If a school's policies are meant to articulate and make sense of the school's Constitution and indeed of its Mission Statement, in theory, any person involved in the school community should, democratically, be able to initiate the policy making process. This would be a sign of a healthy democracy.

In practice, it is the School Executive, or leader group which is most often involved in the initiation of new policies, or the reformation of existing policies.

Simply put, a policy is a document that is put in place where some member of the school community feels that a practice, or a philosophy, or a way of doing business ought to be written down as a helpful and useful guide to decision making. For example, if one of the school's policies specifically precludes corporal punishment, then any member of

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the community who knowingly engages in corporal punishment would understand that he/she is acting outside of the law.

To give an example of how this would work nationally or a corollary. The Bill of Rights would act as the Mission Statement or Vision Statement for our country while the Constitution (often described as one of the best in the world) would seek to give expression to that Bill of Rights. However, the statutes as enacted by Parliament are the "working documents or Policies" that ensure that the Bill of Rights and indeed the Constitution are adhered to.

Similarly, in a school, the policies would be the working documents of the school that translated the Mission Statement and Constitution into everyday action.

So, as stated above, it is usually the School Executive that initiates school policy, but it should be the prerogative of any member of the school community to do so.

## 2. Approval

If a policy document is formulated it should theoretically achieve two objectives:

- First it should be fully aligned with the school's Mission Statement and Constitution.
- Secondly, it should add value to, or enhance the way in which the school operates.

Any proposed policy that does not meet these two objectives, should not, and most often, will not, meet with approval from the various stakeholders in the school community.

Therefore it is important that any proposed policy or indeed any changes to existing policy are first promulgated as a draft document that can be discussed and debated in the various Forums that exist in the school.

If the proposed policy or change to policy affects all stakeholders, then, indeed, all stakeholders should be consulted. Thus the proposed policy should be looked at by the Parents Forum, the Staff Forum, and, where necessary, the School or Pupil's Forum. Only when such a policy has been vigorously debated, discussed and indeed approved by consensus, should it be sent forward to the Board of Governors for consideration. It is then the duty of the Board of Governors fully to make sure that the proposed policy is indeed totally aligned with the school's Mission and its Constitution. Only then should the Board of Governors sanction the policy or the change.

There may, however, be policies that do not affect more than one particular group. For example, Assessment Policy in the Senior School would be of no interest to stakeholders in the Junior School, or in the area of Sports Management. Therefore there must be a distinction between policies which can be approved of by the Board Executive, and policies which need to be debated and discussed by the Board.

Admittedly, this is a grey area. There may well be a case where a policy which has been signed off by the School Executive comes to the Board for information, and the Board Chair (as is his/her right) questions the suitability or, for example, the practicality of such a policy.

This is where good communication between the School Executive and the School Board is of prime importance. Both bodies need to be in a permanent state of developing new policies, reviewing existing policies and working towards a better operational environment for the school. There needs to be a clear understanding, therefore, as to what is the Board's "turf", and what is the School Executive's "turf".

Broadly speaking, it has been suggested, that policies which are "management orientated" should be the business of the School Executive, while policies that are "leadership" orientated should be the business of the Board.

These, however, are very broad definitions, and it would be wise, and indeed should be mandatory for the Board and the Executive constantly to be working on and understanding the boundaries between School Executive decision making and Board decision making. This is after all the reason why we have policies – to aid us in our decision making.

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### 3. Implementation

Once a policy has been approved then it is necessary for that policy to be implemented, and for there to be proof of its implementation. It is all very well to say that the school has a policy that precludes sexual harassment, but there would need to be some sort of proof, or indeed review that indicates among other healthy social interaction and relations that there is a strict attitude in the school against sexual harassment.

For example it should be stated clearly by members of the School Executive each term at combined staff meetings, divisional staff meetings, and indeed other Forums throughout the school that there is a policy of zero tolerance with regard to sexual harassment.

This should be recorded in the Minutes of such Forums, and each person attending such Forums must sign a register, and the register must be attached to the original hard copy of the minutes, and kept on the Headmaster's file.

Any apologies must be recorded, and there must be evidence that the discussion and decisions of the Forum are sent via the minutes to both attendees and non-attendees.

Clearly, an outstanding example is required from all Executives, Managers, and Teachers as well as administrative and Maintenance Staff.

It is the work of the school, its teachers, its various acting committees that govern school life, to ensure that all policies are adhered to, and to make sure that visible proof of that adherence is available at all times.

Once again, for an example, if the school has a clear policy on Crisis Management, then there needs to be evidence on a regular basis that the guidelines for crisis management are not only clearly understood by all concerned, but regularly practiced, and thought about and discussed, and where necessary improved upon.

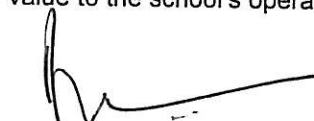
Procedure Documents may be drawn up to outline clearly the actions to be taken to implement a policy. For example, in the Transport Policy, there would be a very specific procedure document which lays out the steps to be completed before children are taken away on a school trip.

### 4. Review / Monitoring

Once again, it falls to the School Executive to keep an up to date schedule of all school policies, and to ensure that they are regularly reviewed as dictated by the policy itself. Some policies, for example, may only need to be reviewed on an annual basis, while others may need to be reviewed more regularly on a monthly basis or a quarterly basis. The policy review should be delegated to a competent person on the Executive who would re-look at the policy, and consult as broadly as is necessary to determine whether the policy is still effective, or whether it requires any changes.

All too often policy documents go into a file, and reside there gathering dust, and when the time comes they are of little or no use to the school.

As is implied by the above, a policy is a dynamic and active document. It cannot be allowed to gather dust and it certainly should never come into existence unless it is going to add value to the operation. Policies that no longer add value to the school's operation should be deregistered and not left to die a slow and lingering death.



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**HEAD**  
For and on behalf of School Executive



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**CHAIR**  
For and on behalf of Board of Governors

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DATE 10.09.2009.

DATE 10 / 09 / 2009

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