

# Engaging parents and families

A toolkit for practitioners

Section 6: Parental representation

**March 2019**

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# Background

This section provides guidance to practitioners regarding the requirements for parental representation as outlined in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006.

The activities will help practitioners to: develop a strategy for parental involvement and engagement; understand the role of the Parent Council; establish a Parent Council; develop a constitution; and manage complaints within an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting or school.

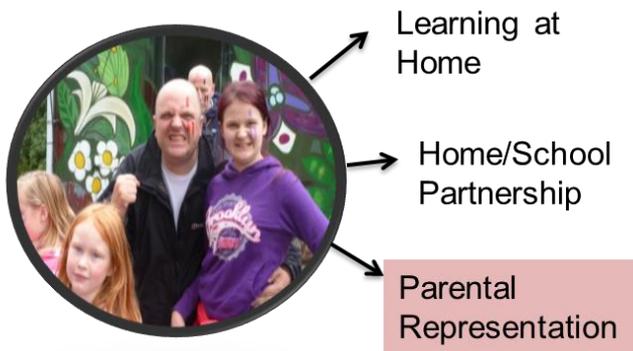


## Parental representation

Parental representation is about ‘providing a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on matters affecting the education of their children’.

**(National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017, p10)**

Parental representation is the third strand of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. The Act provides a framework to ensure that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy matters affecting the education of their children and the ELC setting/school’s arrangements for promoting parental involvement and other matters or issues of interest to parents. It makes provision for parents to be a member of the parent forum at a school and to have their views represented to the school, local authority and others through a representative Parent Council for the school.



The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 aims to help schools, local authorities and practitioners to involve parents and meaningfully engage them in their children’s learning.



# Developing a strategy for parental involvement and engagement

Section 2(1) of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires every local authority to prepare a strategy for parental involvement. The strategy should describe how the local authority will fulfil its duty to:

- involve parents and meaningfully engage them in their own child's education and in the wider school community to improve outcomes for children and young people
- give advice and information to parents in respect of their own child
- promote the establishment of Parent Councils in schools and support their operation to improve outcomes for children and young people
- take account of the needs of care experienced children. The local authority parental involvement and engagement strategy should complement arrangements for integrated working with other professionals and agencies working with care experienced children, young people and their families
- promote equal opportunities and be inclusive of all parents
- establish a complaints procedure in respect of the authority's functions under the Act and in line with the revised [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) (2012)

## Activity 1: Preparing the local authority strategy

### Purpose

To work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop a parental involvement and engagement strategy.

### Reflective questions:

Does your local authority:

- involve parents, children or young people, key staff (e.g. headteachers, quality improvement officers, home-school link workers, integrated children's services staff, educational psychologists, social workers), partner organisations and the community in the development of the strategy?
- support parents to become involved in the development and regular review of the strategy?
- cover the three levels of engagement with parents – Learning at home, Home-school partnership, Parental representation?
- outline ways for parents to be meaningfully engaged in their child's learning and the wider life of the school?
- support ELC settings and schools to work with partners to develop family learning programmes which will help to improve children's progress and achievement
- support parents to help them understand their child's education, their developmental and learning needs?
- support collaborative working between parents, families, schools and the wider school community?
- provide a clear statement of how barriers are being removed to promote parental involvement and engagement?



- outline how your authority, early learning and childcare setting, school and community will work with parents who find it difficult to support their child's education due to family circumstances?
- take account of the needs of care experienced children, young people and their families?
- consider how to involve parents who do not live together, service families, families who are new to Scotland, partners of parents who are in prison?
- promote equal opportunities and take account of the needs of particular minority groups in your local area?
- make links with the authority's duties under other relevant legislation e.g. Additional Support for Learning Act?
- make appropriate links with other relevant policy areas e.g. Curriculum for Excellence, support to pupils, early learning and childcare, additional support needs, customer care and other relevant agencies
- take account of the training and development needs of staff and others working with children and families?
- involve parents in writing improvement plans to help engage parents meaningfully in their children's education and improve outcomes for all children and young people?
- communicate the parental involvement and engagement strategy to parents and make it easily accessible?
- link to the [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#) or [How Good is our School?](#) (Fourth Edition) self-evaluation frameworks on parent partnerships and/or the family learning quality indicator?
- include arrangements to monitor and evaluate the impact of the parental involvement and engagement strategy?
- support Parent Councils and groups to facilitate collaboration and networking?

Further information can be found in the '[Learning together: national action plan on parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home 2018-2021](#)', Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 [Guidance](#) and the [Review of Family Learning](#) (2016).

## Activity 2: Parental representation

The Parental Involvement Act (2006) provides a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on matters affecting the education of their children, the school's arrangements for promoting parental involvement and other matters or issues of interest to parents. It makes provision for parents to be members of the parent forum at a school, and to have their views represented to the school, education authority and others.

### Purpose

To ensure there are opportunities across the ELC setting or school for parental voice and representation.

### Reflective questions:

- How does your school gather feedback from parents on matters relating to the ELC setting or school?
- Does the ELC setting or school have procedures for two-way communications with parents?
- Are there open channels of communication so that parents feel comfortable talking to teachers and making them aware of how children's learning is being supported at home?
- Are parents informed of and involved in new initiatives? Is there effective communication about these and opportunities for parents to discuss how they will be taken forward in the school and what their involvement will be?



# Parent Councils

There is provision in the Parental Involvement Act 2006 for Parent Councils to play an active role in supporting parental involvement in the work and life of the school. The Parent Council is a group of parents selected by members of the parent forum (the collective name for every parent, carer or guardian at a school) to represent all the parents of children at the school. Parent Councils have an important role to play in ensuring that children's education is enriched by parents' valuable life experience, individual personal skills and unique knowledge of their own child.



## What is the role of the Parent Council?

Parent Councils help parents and carers to become more actively and effectively involved in their children's learning. It is recognised that parents play an important role both in their own child's learning and in the life of their school.

Parent Councils are flexible and designed to make sure that they represent the views of all parents through consultation with members of the wider parent forum. The Parent Council along with the parent forum should decide what is most important for the Parent Council to work on.

The role of the Parent Council can include:

- providing a voice for parents, in schools, their local authority and in communities, on issues that are important to them and their children
- helping the school to understand how to most effectively involve parents in their children's learning and in the life of the school
- supporting the school and headteacher in developing strong home-school partnerships
- supporting the school in its development and improvement, and in understanding and making links with the wider community
- capturing the unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience that parents can offer

Headteachers are required to report to the Parent Council, combined Parent Council or parent forum at least once per year on the performance of a school and outline the objectives and ambitions for the school.

The [Review of the impact of the Parental Involvement Act](#) (NPFS, 2017) identified the need to raise awareness of the role and function of the Parent Council. More guidance and support to encourage parents from diverse and cultural backgrounds to join Parent Councils was also highlighted as an area for further development.

The Parent Council chair must be a parent of a child at that school. The parent forum decides on the type of Parent Council and constitution that reflects the nature of the school and the wishes of the parents. The parent forum can agree that the Parent Council constitution allows others to be co-opted. Co-opted members can be drawn from school staff on a voluntary basis and the wider community. For denominational schools, the constitution of the Parent Council must allow for at least one person nominated by the church or denominational body to be co-opted. Headteachers or their representative have a right and a duty to attend Parent Council meetings but are not members and have no voting rights. Schools can choose to set up a combined Parent Council.

Further information is available on [Parentzone Scotland](#).

## Combined Parent Councils

If parents decide they would like to set up a Parent Council which includes more than one school and parent forum, they can set up a Combined Parent Council. This might cover, for example, two neighbouring schools, two schools who share the same headteacher or perhaps a secondary school and its feeder primary school(s).

Where establishments (e.g. ELC settings, primary schools, secondary schools) have merged to become an 'all-through campus', discussions should take place about how a single Parent Council with parents from all sectors would work and the benefits of such an approach (e.g. transitions, appointments of senior staff).

## Further information

[Connect](#) have a range of leaflets and resources on their website about the role and function of Parent Councils. The leaflets come under the following general themes/headings:

- Connect membership information
- communication
- constitutions and charitable status
- PVG and child protection
- data protection
- education law and jargon
- how to run a Parent Council/parent teacher association
- your Parent Council/parent teacher association
- fundraising and running safe and successful events
- equality and fairness



[National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) gives Parent Councils and parents an opportunity to discuss and raise educational issues of mutual interest or concern at a national level. The Forum has a membership made up of volunteer parent representatives from every local authority area in Scotland.

The National Parent Forum of Scotland provides an extensive and innovative series of information for parents through the '...in a Nutshell' publications. The full range of nutshells can be viewed on the publications [guide](#).

## Activity 3: Establishing a Parent Council

### Purpose

To establish a Parent Council.

The Parent Council represents the parents of children at a local authority school. The Parent Council is selected by members of the parent forum (parents who have a child at a local authority school) to represent all the parents of children at a school. Parent Councils are flexible and the parent forum can decide on the type of group it wants to represent their views. For example, parents might decide they want a representative from each year group in the school or they may wish to include pupils, teachers at the school, or parents from a feeder primary or secondary school. This flexibility allows parents to choose a Parent Council which reflects their school and will encourage parents to get involved.

The reflective questions below are designed to help local authorities promote the establishment of Parent Councils.

## Reflective questions:

- Does your local authority promote and establish Parent Councils in your area?
- Do parent representatives have a general knowledge of the local authority's duties to promote parental involvement and meaningful engagement in children's learning?
- Does your local authority work with parent representatives to help them gain the views and involvement of the wider parent forum?
- Does your local authority offer training and information for parent representatives to help them understand and undertake their role?
- Are parents involved in the appointments process for senior staff ([Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments \(Scotland\) Regulations 2007](#)) as well as other duties?

## Activity 4: Developing a constitution

### Purpose

To develop a constitution for the Parent Council.

This section sets out questions and suggested wording for a Parent Council constitution. By working through the questions, the answers will give you suggestions for the type of Parent Council which will suit your school. An example of a constitution and a template are provided below. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 sets out arrangements for the membership and functions of a Parent Council. Whilst there is no need to repeat them in the constitution, they will remain legal requirements. The same point applies to any other piece of relevant legislation. This section should be studied closely alongside the guidance on the Act.

### Topics to consider

How your Parent Council works is determined by what is set down in its constitution. The main function of a constitution is to describe the Parent Council, what its objectives are and how it will carry these out.

The questions in the various topics below are based on setting up a single Parent Council but these can be adapted accordingly for Combined Parent Councils as the issues will be similar.

#### Topic 1: Name – What do we call ourselves?

The parent forum decides on a name for the Parent Council. It is not necessary to call it a Parent Council, it could be called 'Friends of the School'. The name chosen helps tell people what the Parent Council stands for and what it is trying to achieve.

#### Topic 2: Aims/objectives - What is the role of the Parent Council and how should it carry out this work?

The role of the Parent Council falls broadly into the following areas:

- supporting the school in its work with pupils
- identifying ways to involve and meaningfully engage parents in their child's learning
- representing the views of parents
- promoting contact between the school, parents, pupils, ELC settings, local authority, partner organisations, practitioners and the community
- reporting to the parent forum

In writing the aims/objectives for the Parent Council, these should be kept broad, rather than focused on particular issues and ideas. This is to ensure that they do not limit the Parent Council's ability to act in the future if a different issue arises.

The formal functions of the Parent Council are described in the Parental Involvement Act (2006). These do not have to be included in the constitution but parents might decide to reflect them in the constitution, provided they are consistent with the Act itself.

When drawing up the aims and objectives, consider the range of issues that are currently important for the school, what the Parent Council might do to help take these forward and whether such activities would be possible under this set of aims. For example, does the proposed objectives allow the Parent Council to have fundraising activities?

### **Topic 3: Members**

The size of the Parent Council can be as small or large as parents think it needs to be in order to fulfil the role of Parent Council. The size might also vary according to the number of pupils, diversity of parents and the context of the school. It is for the parent forum to decide on the number of members that are to be on the Parent Council but having a minimum and maximum, rather than a fixed number is recommended.

If you have a small Parent Council, there may not be enough people to do all the work. Should you have a large Parent Council, it may be difficult to run the meetings. Consideration should be given to having sub-groups (accountable to the Parent Council) to help share the workload. However, it is worth remembering that it is unlikely that Parent Council members will be able to attend every meeting, so whatever size the overall Council is, most meetings will have fewer people than this attending. If you only have a small number of parents involved at any time, use this as a platform to build on.



### **Topic 4: Appointment system**

#### **Parents**

Members of the Parent Council should be drawn from the parent forum, carers and guardians of pupils at the school.

#### **The headteacher**

The headteacher of the school has a right and a duty to attend meetings of the Parent Council, or to be represented. The headteacher can play an important role in advising the Parent Council on all

issues relating to the work of the school, what it does to involve parents, as well as general education matters of interest to parents.

### **Church representatives**

If your school is a denominational school, then the constitution of the Parent Council must allow for at least one person nominated by the church or denominational body to be co-opted.

Some questions to think about in selecting Parent Council members:

- how do you identify parents to join the Parent Council e.g. they could volunteer or be nominated by another parent?
- how can barriers be removed to allow all parents the opportunity to be involved in the Parent Council?
- do you want to have one or more representative from each year group at the school, including parents from the early learning and childcare setting attached to your school?
- do you want to appoint substitutes to ensure each year group is always represented at Parent Council meetings even if one member is unable to attend?

Once you have made decisions about these questions, a decision needs to be made about how the members should be selected.

### **Selecting Parent Council members**

- What methods would make it easy for all parents to take part in the selection process?
- What happens if you get more volunteers than there are places available?

### **Some questions to consider**

- How do you make a decision about which parents join the Parent Council?
- Do you want to run an election?
- Do you want to put all the names in a hat and have a draw for the successful candidates?
- Can you still involve the people who volunteered, but were not chosen for the Parent Council, on sub-groups?
- How long should membership of the Parent Council last e.g. 1, 2 or 3 years?
- Can parents become members of the Parent Council during the school year? If so, what process is in place to allow this to happen?

### **Topic 5: Representation**

In addition to parent members, the parent forum can decide to co-opt other members onto the Parent Council.

#### **School staff – teaching and support staff**

If the parent forum wishes, and the school staff are willing, it can invite school staff (both teaching and support staff) to join the Parent Council. This helps take forward a whole school partnership approach. However, you will want to ensure that parents remain in overall majority on the Parent Council. A parent forum could decide, for example, that they want their Parent Council to be made up of two thirds parent members and one third co-opted teacher members to strengthen partnerships within the school.

If school staff agree to participate in the Parent Council, they may decide they simply want to nominate representatives. Alternatively, there could be an agreed rotation among staff.

#### **Pupils**

Parent forums, in taking account of pupils' views, may wish to do so in the following ways:

- there could be formal and/or informal liaison between the Parent and Pupil Councils
- there could be pupil members on the Parent Council
- the pupil council and the Parent Council might have the chance to send representatives to each other's meetings as and when it is appropriate

### **Topic 6: Co-opted members**

The parents forum can decide to co-opt others in addition to teachers, pupils and support staff onto the Parent Council. There may be people who can bring a particular area of expertise and skills or someone might be able to help develop strong links with the local community. The parent forum can decide if they wish to invite co-opted members onto the Parent Council.

A person does not always require to be co-opted to benefit from their experience. The parent forum or Parent Council can decide to invite people with particular expertise to attend meetings as and when it is necessary. Consideration could be given to inviting local councillors, community councillors, MSPs etc as guests and to support the work of the Parent Council.

If the parent forum decides to invite co-opted members to join the Parent Council, the arrangements for their involvement should be set out in the Parent Council constitution. The parent forum will also need to think about how many co-opted places they want to provide and for how long co-optees will serve. Once again it will be important to consider the impact co-optees will have on the overall size of the Parent Council and on the balance of membership.

## Topic 7: Office bearers

There is no requirement for Parent Councils to have office bearers although there are specific tasks that have to be carried out. For example meetings have to be chaired, agendas set, minutes taken, regular communications with all parents maintained and the finances managed. It might be helpful therefore to have some clear roles identified within the Parent Council. The Parent Council can decide to appoint a Clerk to provide administrative support and look after the Parent Council's financial accounts. Having office bearers within a group is recommended as good practice.

The parent forum can decide to have a Chair to chair meetings but this person must be a parent of a child at the school. There is flexibility around how the role of the chair operates. For example, the parent forum could decide that the role of the Chair will be shared and each parent member takes a turn at chairing Parent Council meetings.

### Questions for parents to think about

- Do we need office bearers? If so, which office bearers do we need?
- Do we want to have one chair of the Parent Council or do we want to share this around parent members?
- Do we want the office bearers to be agreed by the Parent Council, or by the parent forum?



It is recommended that office bearers are agreed outwith the Annual General Meeting (AGM). If office bearers are to be chosen by the Parent Council members, you may wish to ask the headteacher, or an independent person, to chair that part of the meeting to ensure the process is fair.

In the event that the child of a parent who chairs the meetings leaves the school, consideration should be given to possible interim procedures. For example, a vice-chair could act as chair for the time being, provided they are still a member of the parent forum. Alternatively the role of Chair could be shared among parent members of the Parent Council until the Annual General Meeting.

## Topic 8: Feedback to the parent forum

The Parent Council acts as the collective voice of all parents within the wider parent forum. It is important that the Council has flexible arrangements in place for hearing the views of parents, representing these to the school, or the local authority, or other body and providing feedback to the parent forum.

The Parent Council has to report back at least once a year to the parent forum but it is also important to have good quality ongoing communications. These arrangements do not need to be set out in the constitution but it should outline how a special general meeting can be called.

### Annual General Meeting (AGM)

It is good practice for the Parent Council to hold an Annual General Meeting. At an Annual General Meeting the Parent Council may formally report back to the parent forum and new members may be selected (although the Parent Council's constitution may allow members to be co-opted between Annual General Meetings). These would be among the matters for the parent forum to decide this when

agreeing the Parent Council's constitution. If the Parent Forum decides to have an Annual General Meeting, a new Parent Council will need to hold this within 12 months of commencing, and then every 12 months after that. It is important that people know in good time about the meeting and feel that they are welcome and able to attend.

### **Topic 9: How should the Parent Council carry out its work?**

Clear arrangements about how the Parent Council organises and runs meetings can help them operate more effectively and efficiently. Some key areas to cover are suggested in the draft wording for your constitution.

#### **Questions for parents to think about**

- How often are the Parent Council and any working groups are going to meet?
- How will decisions be made?
- What happens if an important matter needs to be discussed between scheduled meetings?
- What would the group do if a parent member of the Parent Council acts in a way that is not in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Council? Inviting a member to leave the Parent Council should be a very last resort. This would happen in situations where, for example, a member was using the Parent Council in order to promote an individual issue to do with their own child or if the member's behaviour at meetings was disruptive or abusive.

### **Topic 10: Notes of meetings**

You can help keep all members of the parent forum informed by making copies of the Parent Council agendas and minutes of meetings available.

### **Topic 11: Confidentiality**

Parent Councils are required to be open and transparent. In general, all meetings of the Parent Council are open to the public. However, the Parent Council, (including the headteacher) also has the right to meet in private during discussion of any matter which the Parent Council considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis. These would normally be confidential matters to a named individual.

Individual cases relating to pupils, teachers or parents at the school are not matters for direct Parent Council involvement. For example, if there is a case of bullying at the school, the Parent Council may discuss the general bullying policy but will wish to leave any individual case of bullying to be addressed by the school and others as appropriate.

There may be other situations where the Parent Council wants to support a pupil who is suffering from serious illness. If so, the Parent Council should not discuss the individual case, or act on behalf of the pupil, but could write to the parents of the child asking for permission to provide support e.g. through fundraising.

### **Topic 12: How do we look after the finances of the Parent Council?**

Responsibility for the Parent Council's finances lies with all Parent Council members. The Parent Council is accountable to the parent forum.

Whilst some Parent Councils may ask their clerk to handle their finances, most will appoint a Treasurer, a designated parent member of the Parent Council who is confident with financial record-keeping and managing a bank account. This is even more important if the Parent Council/parent group fundraises as the amount of money will be higher. It also ensures direct accountability to the Parent Council. This role involves reporting regularly to the Parent Council (an agenda item on finances can be included for every meeting). The local authority can provide guidance on financial regulations.

The Treasurer also provides an annual financial report which is made available to the parent forum at the Annual General Meeting. This report includes details of income and expenditure and should be independently audited by someone with finance skills and experience. The independent auditor does not need to be an accountant. Someone who works with figures, is known to and trusted by the Parent Council and who is independent of the Parent Council is sufficient. If the Parent Council is a registered charity, there are additional specific legal requirements for financial record-keeping and reporting.

It is advisable to establish good financial practices, procedures and policies, such as safe-cash handling (two people count cash, record it in writing and counter-sign; cash is not kept at home etc). The accounts should be reviewed and presented at the Annual General Meeting.

Further information for Treasurers and Parent Councils can be found on [Connect's](#) website.

### Topic 13: Changing the constitution

The Parent Council constitution will set out how changes should be made to the constitution. Usually, this requires a certain notice period to all parent forum members with information about the proposed changes. Changes can usually be made at the Annual General Meeting or at an Extraordinary General Meeting. Arrangements for calling an Extraordinary General Meeting and for voting on motions e.g. to change the constitution are usually set out in the constitution. A majority view (show of hands or more formal vote in writing) to support the change is usually required.



### Topic 14: Dissolution of the Parent Council

If your Parent Council is dissolved, the Parental Involvement Act (2006) requires that any remaining funds and other property are passed to the local authority and, so long as the school continues, be used for the benefit of the school. Where the reason for your school's Parent Council being dissolved is that a Combined Parent Council has been established, the Parent Council's property passes to the new Combined Parent Council.



## Constitution example and template

### Example

This example of a Parent Council constitution is used with permission from [Connect](#) (formerly Scottish Parent Teacher Council) and it can be tailored to meet the individual needs of Parent Councils.

1. This is the constitution for *[Anytown School]* Parent Council (or alternative name).
2. The **objectives** of the Parent Council are to:
  - work in partnership with the school to create a welcoming school which is inclusive for all parents
  - promote collaborative working between parents, families and the school
  - develop ways to actively engage parents to support children's education, the welfare of the pupils and improve their outcomes
  - identify and represent the views of parents on the education provided by the school and other matters affecting the education and welfare of the pupils.
3. The membership will be a minimum of three parents of children attending the school. The maximum size is *[insert a figure according to the size of the school and as agreed by members of the parent forum]*.
4. The Parent Council will be selected for a period of *[insert one/two/three year(s)]*, after which they may put themselves forward for re-selection if they wish.

All the parents of children at the school can take part in the selection by post, text or email. Parents will have *[insert figure agreed by parent forum]* weeks to select their representatives.

or

Any parents of a child at the school can volunteer to be a member of the Parent Council. In the event that the number of volunteers exceeds the number of places set out in the constitution, members will be selected by *[insert chosen method of selection]*. Anyone not selected to be a member of the Parent Council may be offered the opportunity to be part of any sub-group(s) set up by the Parent Council.

or

The Parent Council will be made up of two representatives from each year group who will be chosen by the parents of children in those year groups.

5. The Parent Council may co-opt up to *[insert figure as agreed by members of the parent forum\*]* to assist it with carrying out its functions.

\*If your school is a denominational school add: *'of which at least one must be a member of the church or denominational body in whose interest the school is conducted'*.

or

Two-thirds of the Parent Council will be made up of parent forum members and one-third of the membership will be reserved for other co-opted members including teaching and support staff in the school. 19 | Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners

The number of parent members on the Parent Council must always be greater than co-opted members. Co-opted members will be invited to serve for a period of *[insert one/two/three year(s)]*, after which time the Parent Council will review and consider requirements for co-opted membership.

6. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Parent Council will be appointed by the Parent Council members immediately following its formation.

or

Office bearers will be re-selected by the Parent Council on an annual basis (at the Annual General Meeting of the parent forum).

If the parent forum decides to have a Chair:

The Parent Council will be chaired by a parent of a child attending *[Anytown School]*. If the child ceases to be a pupil, a new chair will be agreed at the next meeting.

or

If the child ceases to be a pupil, the role of the chair will be rotated around the parent members of the Parent Council until a new chair is appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

7. The Parent Council is accountable to the parent forum for *[Anytown School]* and will make a report to it at least once each year about its activities on behalf of all the parents.

If [x] number [or %] of members of the parent forum request a special general meeting to discuss issues falling within the Parent Council's remit, the Parent Council shall arrange this. The Parent Council shall give all members of the Forum at least [2 weeks] notice of the meeting and, at the same time, circulate notice of the matter, or matters, to be discussed at the meeting.

8. The Annual General Meeting will be held in April of each year. A notice of the meeting including date, time, and place will be sent to all members of the parent forum at least two weeks in advance. The meeting will include:

- A report on the work of the Parent Council and its committee(s)
- Selection of the new Parent Council
- Discussion of issues that members of the parent forum may wish to raise
- Approval of the accounts and appointment of the independent inspector.

9. The Parent Council will meet at least once in every school term. Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each parent member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie. Any two parent members of the Parent Council can request that an additional meeting be held and all members of the Parent Council will be given at least one week's notice of date, time and place of the meeting. If a Parent Council member acts in a way that is considered by other members to undermine the objectives of the Parent Council, their membership of the Parent Council shall be terminated if the majority of parent members agree. Termination of membership would be confirmed in writing to the member.

10. Copies of the Agenda and Minutes of Meetings will be available to all parents of children at *[Anytown School]* and to all teachers at the school, from *[the Secretary of the Parent Council/Clerk to the Parent Council, from the school office and/or school website]*. Parent Councils may choose to set up their own website but this should not be the only method of communicating with parents.

11. Meetings of the Parent Council shall be open to the public, unless the Parent Council is discussing an issue which it considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis. In such circumstances, only members of the Parent Council and the headteacher, or his or her representative, can attend.

12. The Treasurer will open a Bank or Building Society account in the name of the Parent Council for all Parent Council funds. Withdrawals will require the signature of the Treasurer and one other Parent Council member.

The Treasurer will keep an accurate record of all income and expenditure and will provide a summary of this for each Parent Council meeting and a full account for the AGM. The Parent Council accounts will be reviewed by the independent inspector appointed at the previous AGM.

The Parent Council shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies are used in accordance with the objectives of the Parent Council.

13. The Parent Council may change its constitution after obtaining consent from members of the parent forum. Members of the parent forum will be sent a copy of any proposed amendment and given reasonable time to respond to the proposal.
14. Should the Parent Council be dissolved, a decision should be made about how the remaining funds will be used prior to dissolution or passed to the local authority for the benefit of the school (or schools) where this continues.

## Template

This Parent Council constitution template is used with permission from [Connect](#) (formerly Scottish Parent Teacher Council) and it can be tailored to meet the individual needs of Parent Councils.

**Name** - *[Anytown School]* Parent Council (or alternative name).

*The parent forum must decide the name of the Parent Council - the committee could select a number of names and put this to a vote. It does not have to be called a Parent Council; it could be a 'Friends of' group, for example. The name should tell people what the group stands for and what it is trying to achieve.*

### **Aims/Objectives**

*The aims should be general so that the Parent Council is not restricted in its activities.*

The objectives of the Parent Council are:

- to promote close co-operation and communication between parents and teachers.
- to promote equality and fairness
- to study and discuss matters of mutual interest relating to the education and welfare of pupils
- to engage in activities which support and advance the education of pupils attending the school

### **Powers**

The Parent Council shall have the power to do anything considered by them to be in furtherance of the aims but remembering that they are there to represent the views of the parent forum.

### **Number of Members**

The membership consists of parents/carers of children attending *[Anytown School]* as selected by the parent forum.

There are no set rules about the size of a Parent Council and it is up to the parents to decide how large/small the Parent Council should be. It is a good idea to allow for a range rather than a fixed number of members.

### **Annual General Meetings**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be held in *(any convenient month)* each year. The notice calling the meeting shall be sent to the parent forum at least two weeks in advance. The business shall include:

- the work of the Parent Council
- approval of the accounts
- appointment of an individual who will review the annual accounts
- any resolutions submitted by the parent forum
- election of members to serve on the Parent Council

At all general meetings, voting shall be on the basis of one vote per parent/full Parent Council member present at the meeting.

At all general meetings the quorum shall consist of *(any number)*.

*As long as all parents have been told of the meeting and of the main items of business in adequate time, there is no need to have a large quorum. This might be difficult to achieve and prevent the Parent*

*Council from holding a proper AGM. It may be a good idea to hold the AGM in the autumn in order to attract new parents.*

The Parent Council or (any number) of the parent forum shall have power to call an Extraordinary General Meeting.

*A number equal to the number for a quorum is suggested.*

### **Parent Council Membership**

Members of the Parent Council shall be appointed at the AGM. They shall be elected for a one year term and be eligible for re-election. Parents shall always form the majority of the Parent Council.

*The term of office can be anything you choose but 'one year' and 'eligible for re-election' offers the greatest flexibility. This could also be done in a more informal way, i.e. in small schools the parent forum is the Parent Council as there are so few parents.*

The office bearers will be chairperson, secretary, Treasurer and such others as may be required. The office bearers will be elected by the Parent Council at the first meeting after the AGM.

*Although there is no requirement to have office bearers, there are clear tasks that have to be done. It is possible to have office bearers elected at the AGM but the advantage of having them appointed by the Parent Council is that if someone has to stand down during the year, a replacement can be appointed without having to call an Extraordinary General Meeting.*

The headteacher or his/her representative has a right and a duty to attend meetings of the Parent Council, (this is written in legislation).

*The headteacher attends meetings in an advisory capacity and does not have voting rights unless these are given by the Parent Council/parent forum.*

The Parent Council shall invite the church/denominational body to nominate a representative to be co-opted onto the Parent Council.

*This is a requirement in denominational schools but may be a consideration for Parent Councils in non-denominational schools.*

The Parent Council may co-opt up to (insert a figure which has been agreed by the parent forum) persons to help carry out its functions. The co-opted members shall retire at the AGM but shall be eligible to be co-opted for a further term.

Each member of the Parent Council shall have one vote and resolutions shall be passed by a simple majority vote of those present. The Chairperson shall have both a deliberative and casting vote - one vote as a PC member and one vote as Chair. The Chairperson's casting vote shall be used only in the event of a tie.

The Secretary shall be responsible for keeping accurate minutes of all meetings and shall make these available upon request to any member of the parent forum.

A member of the Parent Council failing to attend three consecutive meetings without reason/apologies may be deemed to have retired from the Parent Council.

*It may also be useful to think about what to do if a member acts in a way that is not within the aims/objectives of the Parent Council or brings the group into disrepute. It may not be necessary to write this into the constitution but it may be a good idea to have guidelines/procedures in writing.*

## **Meetings**

Meetings of the Parent Council shall be held as required. At all meetings of the Parent Council (*insert a number*) shall form a quorum.

*A quorum is only valid if all the Parent Council members have been informed of the meeting, and sent notice of the items of business, in advance. Don't make the quorum too large or the work of your PC may be restricted.*

All Parent Council meetings shall be open and any member of the parent forum may attend although they will not have voting rights.

## **Finance**

The funds of the Parent Council shall be lodged in a bank, building society or other account in the name of the Parent Council. Cheques shall be drawn or withdrawals made against the signatures of at least two named Parent Council members.

*If there is a Parent Council clerk then they may be added to this clause.*

The Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping accurate records of the financial transactions of the Parent Council. The books shall be brought to balance six weeks before the AGM and the accounts shall be reviewed by an individual appointed at the previous AGM by the parent forum.

*The individual does not have to be a qualified accountant, just someone who is comfortable working with figures, who is not a member of or related to a member of the Parent Council and whom everyone trusts.*

The Parent Council shall be responsible for ensuring that all property/money received by/for the parent forum/Council shall be applied for the aims of the Parent Council.

'Aims of the Parent Council' include 'supporting and advancing the education of the pupils', e.g. buying computers etc. Wrangles over money are the most common cause of problems for parents' groups. It is important to keep good records and it helps if the Parent Council determines how the money they have raised is spent - that it is not simply handed over to the school. A report should be made to the parent forum at the AGM (see 'General Meetings – business') of what's been bought.

## **Changes to the Constitution**

Changes or additions must be made at an AGM or an EGM called for the purpose. The proposed change shall be specified in the notice calling the meeting and be approved by not less than two thirds of those present.

## **Dissolution**

In the event that the Parent Council ceases to exist any remaining funds should be distributed for the benefit of the children at the school and/or Local Authority as necessary.

# Complaints procedure

No matter how good communications, relationships, partnerships, strategies and policies are, there will be times when there are disagreements, misunderstandings or things go wrong.

Local authorities are required to establish a complaints procedure in respect of their functions under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. They are also required to have a Complaints Handling Procedure (2012) to ensure that there is a standardised approach to dealing with customer complaints across the local authority sector. The aim of a standardised approach is to implement a consistent process for customers to follow which makes it simpler to complain. It also ensures staff and customer confidence in complaints handling and encourages bodies to make best use of lessons from complaints.

## Managing complaints

In order to maintain positive relationships, it is usually better for all parties, if parental concerns and complaints are resolved with the early learning and childcare setting or school as quickly as possible. Handling complaints properly is an important part of good customer care. Furthermore, it is imperative that parents:

- feel their views have been listened to
- all reasonable steps are taken to find a resolution as early as possible
- are reassured that ELC settings and schools are willing to improve and learn from any mistakes and are able to continue working in partnership

### Top Tips

- Follow the procedures set out in your local authority's Complaints Handling Procedure.
- Use face-to-face contact and the telephone if appropriate. Do not automatically send a letter as most parents prefer to talk in person about their concerns and identify a way forward or find a solution.
- Find out straight away what would help.
- Be clear what solutions you can offer.
- Offer an apology when appropriate.
- Give personal and specific replies. Address all the concerns raised.
- Use one point of contact.
- Let parents know about improvements made as a result of their complaints.
- Keep parents informed of how their complaint is progressing.

### Reflective questions:

- Does your local authority have a Complaints Handling Procedure?
- Does your local authority involve Parent Councils and others in the establishment and review of its Complaints Handling Procedure?
- Is there a process in place to monitor and evaluate complaints data?
- Are all staff encouraged to have a positive attitude towards parental complaints/concerns?
- Are parents reassured that their rights to confidentiality will be respected and next steps discussed?
- Does your local authority, early learning and childcare setting or school support parents who face difficulties in communicating their concerns or complaints?

- Can parents raise a concern with a member of staff in a way that is easiest for them - either by talking in person, by email, on the telephone, or in writing?
- Are there arrangements in place to give feedback to parents who make complaints?
- Do school staff have access to appropriate development opportunities for handling concerns or complaints?
- Is there a single point of contact at a local authority level for matters that are not resolved at establishment level? Do early learning and childcare settings, schools and parents know when and how to contact this person?
- Does the authority have arrangements in place to offer mediation or independent resolution approaches if required?
- Does the local authority make parents aware of how to progress a complaint or concern if they remain unhappy?

## Activity 5: Advice, information and managing complaints

### Purpose

To understand the role of local authorities, ELC settings and schools in providing advice, information and managing complaints.

Under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, local authorities and headteachers are required to give advice and information to parents and Parent Councils. Research and engagement with parents highlighted 'an appetite for clear, concise and consistent information on everything from pregnancy to the teenage years and beyond' (National Parenting Strategy, 2012).

Information and advice for parents should be:

- comprehensive
- consistent
- appropriate
- meet the needs of families throughout their child's learning journey
- be accessible to a diverse range of parents
- delivered in the right way(s)

### Reflective questions:

- Does your parental involvement strategy set out the arrangements your local authority, ELC settings and schools have for giving advice and information to parents?
- Are these arrangements inclusive and do they include parents who do not live together, service families, families who are new to Scotland, partners of parents who may be in prison?

Further information on resolving disagreements is contained in section 5 of the toolkit.



# Reading list

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004). The Stationery Office Limited.  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/contents>

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[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/pdfs/asp\\_20090007\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/pdfs/asp_20090007_en.pdf)

Education Scotland (2015), 'How good is our school? (Fourth edition)'. Livingston.  
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/HGIOS4>

National Parent Forum of Scotland (2017), 'Review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006'. <https://www.npfs.org.uk/downloads/review-of-the-impact-of-the-2009-parental-involvement-act/>

Scottish Executive (2006), 'Scottish Schools (Parental involvement) Act 2006 Guidance'. Edinburgh. Astron. <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2006/09/08094112/0>

Scottish Executive (2007), 'The Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations. Edinburgh. The Stationery Office Limited.  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2007/132/made>

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act (2006).  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/8/pdfs/asp\\_20060008\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/8/pdfs/asp_20060008_en.pdf)

The Scottish Government (2012), 'National Parenting Strategy'. Edinburgh. APS Group Scotland.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0040/00403769.pdf>

# Further Information

[Connect](#)

[National Parent Forum of Scotland](#)

[Parentzone Scotland](#)

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