

# **East Dunbartonshire Council**

## **Education Service**

# **Parental Engagement Strategy**

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## **1.0 Context and Background**

### **1.1 Introduction and Rationale**

This document sets out East Dunbartonshire Council's Education Parental Engagement Strategy, outlining plans to improve parental involvement in their child's learning through clear engagement and communication; enabling all parents to support their child's learning in and out of school.

*'Parental engagement focuses on ways in which parents and carers, families and professionals work together to support children's learning. Schools involve parents and carers by enabling ongoing, two-way communications between home and school; providing parents and carers with opportunities to contribute to leading improvements and making decisions that affect the school; using the skills of parents and carers to enrich the curriculum.'*

*'International evidence confirms that parental involvement and engagement in children's learning supports improved attainment and achievement. Research shows that when parents and carers support their children's learning, and when children live in a stimulating home learning environment, it improves children's attainment and achievement.'*

National Improvement Framework 2017

It is the aim of all schools and services to ensure the highest standards of attainment and achievement for all children within East Dunbartonshire. Parents are partners in their child's learning and parental engagement has to be embedded in school and service strategies.

*'Maximising children's learning is best facilitated by parents engaging in learning activities in the home, in tandem with similar critical instructions being received at school.'* (Crosnoe 2012)

### **1.2 National and Local Policies Influencing Parental Engagement**

The strategy takes account of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act (2006). The Act specifies that schools should work closely with other services. In East Dunbartonshire Council, this includes youth services, health and social work. Consideration should be given to how schools interact with other services and how to help encourage parents become involved.

Duties within the Parental Involvement Act specify that:

- Parents should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home and in the community;
- Learning at home should be included in the parental engagement strategy devised by local authorities.

The Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act (2006) facilitates the formation of a Parent Council at every local authority school. The role of the Parent Council is to:

- Support the school in its work with pupils;
- Represent the views of parents and carers;
- Encourage links between the school, parents and carers, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community;
- Report back to the school's Parent Forum;
- Play a role in the appointment of headteachers and depute headteachers; and
- To support the school and pupils during school inspections.

All parents and carers are automatically members of that school's Parent Forum. As a member of a Parent Forum, you have:

- A right to advice and information about your child's education at the school;
- The opportunity to be more involved with what the school is doing;
- And the opportunity to have your views represented through the Parent Council at your school.

The Review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act in 2017 found that:

- Most parents and Parent Councils had limited knowledge of what learning at home was and were confused with the difference in this and homework;
- Headteachers felt that they could improve on strategies to support learning at home but further staff also needed further clarification of what learning at home might be;
- There was concern that increased focus on learning at home could widen the attainment gap due to barriers e.g. financial, time, location of services;
- There was a requirement for teaching staff to engage more with parents and for schools to have robust homework policies in place.

The National Improvement Framework (NIF), together with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) enables everyone involved with children to collaborate and work together to ensure that children reach their very best in both attainment, achievement and wellbeing. This means working across organisational boundaries, putting children, and their families at the heart of decision making processes, giving our children and young people the best possible start in life.

A key driver of The National Improvement Framework (NIF) is parental engagement. The framework states;

***‘...we want to improve and increase ways in which parents and families can engage with teachers and partners to support their children and increase the voice of parents in leading improvements with schools.’***

Parental and Family engagement has been brought to the fore with the recent publication of; How Good is our School? 4 (HGIOS?4), in which quality indicators based around family learning and partnership are addressed. Both indicators focus on increasing the positive impact of working with families to improve learning and achievement. The emphasis is on schools working in partnership with others in the community to support families to secure better

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outcomes through programmes that enable them to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

Other relevant national policies and guidance include:

- Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)
- Early Years Framework
- Building the Ambition
- How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC)
- Early Years Collaborative/Raising Attainment for All
- National Parenting Strategy.

## **2.0 Consultation**

### **2.1 Stakeholder Involvement**

The East Dunbartonshire Council Parental Engagement Strategy provides an increased focus on engaging parents in their child's learning. Many stakeholders have been involved in the formulation of the strategy, including:

- Education Services – early years, primary, secondary and psychological service personnel;
- Representatives from the East Dunbartonshire Parent Council Forum;
- Parent representatives from East Dunbartonshire Council schools.

### **2.2 Summary of Consultations**

The consultations resulted in identification of three key areas for improvement in line with guidance from the Parental Involvement Act 2006 and the Review of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act) 2006 (2017).

1. Establishment of practices and procedures for effective and clear communication;
2. Removing potential barriers to engagement; and
3. Enabling parents to support their child's learning.

## **3.0 Key Areas for Improvement**

### **3.1 Establishing Practices and Procedures for Effective Communication**

#### **3.1.1 East Dunbartonshire Council Education Service will:**

- promote and support Parent Councils and informal parent groups to ensure there are mechanisms for parental involvement in place in schools;
- provide updated information to parents, Parent Councils and schools in relation to local and national educational developments;
- provide methods of communication, including the provision of websites to support schools;
- provide advice on the appropriateness of channels of communication;

- consult and communicate with Parent Councils on relevant issues including the appointment of senior staff;
- work with the Parent Council Forum to consult and communicate on relevant issues as suggested by the Forum;
- consult with parents on their views in order to inform change and improvement.

### 3.1.2 Schools and services should:

- seek to have a fair and equitable representation of parents on the parent council ensuring all parents are aware that under Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act) 2006 every parent has the opportunity to become a member of the Parent Council;
- set up a framework of communication in consultation with parents, that is suitable to the community, in a way that is meaningful and fosters positive relationship;
- have a variety of methods of communication to meet all needs including verbal, written and digital;
- ensure web sites are kept up to date with suitable links to resources;
- ensure parents are fully involved in the school's self evaluation of its performance;
- monitor the impact of parental involvement and family learning as part of self evaluation;
- ensure parents are fully involved in school improvement planning;
- ensure parental involvement in decisions involving their child particularly those with additional support needs;
- ensure effective communication in relation to children's learning and development;
- ensure parental rights are respected, particularly where parents are separated and also in relation to looked after children;
- ensure parents are fully involved in transition arrangements particularly when the child has additional support needs.

## 3.2 Overcoming Barriers to Engagement

Parents may face a number of barriers preventing them in fully supporting their child's learning. These can be practical difficulties such as busy work schedules, lack of time, parenting challenges or not knowing how to become involved. Parents may also have had a negative experience in their own education and therefore lack the confidence to engage. Parents, who are not confident with communication, including those with English as a second language, may not feel able to engage with the school.

### 3.2.1 East Dunbartonshire Council Education Service will:

- provide parenting support prioritised in areas of greatest need through the Place approach;
- provide support and advice on family learning approaches to reduce the impact of poverty;
- provide translation services as required;
- facilitate access to support services;
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### 3.2.2 Schools and services should:

- identify barriers to parental engagement and raise awareness of provision offered by the council to support parents e.g family learning support;
- promote and run programmes in relation to parenting support, Triple P;
- ensure parents are aware of their ability to bring someone with them to school meetings or/and have an advocacy representative;
- consider different ways to communicate including the use of learning journals, IT to support engagement, translation services, making arrangements to speak to parents rather than writing;
- ensure parents' events and meetings are organised at times to suit parents;
- signpost individual parents to available support services ;
- ensure procedures are in place to maximise the educational potential of looked after children;
- ensure parents who retain parental rights should be given opportunities to engage with the school and early years establishments to meet their needs.

### 3.3 Enabling parents to support their child's learning and development

Parental engagement has an important and positive impact on children's learning. It is therefore a priority to identify interventions that are effective in supporting parental engagement, particularly for those parents who are either not significantly involved in their children's education or who are not involved at all. Schools can support family learning by working in partnership with other services.

Schools and families can engage with family learning to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Parenting support is provided in all local authority early years' establishments. This can be offered through group or individual support such as Triple P (Positive Parenting Programmes) and through Supporting Family Workers within Early Years and Primary establishments.

*'Family learning encourages family members to learn together, fostering positive attitudes to lifelong learning. We want to improve and increase the ways in which parents, carers and families can engage with teachers and partners to support their children and increase the voice of parents and carers in leading improvements within schools.'*

*National Improvement Framework 2017*

*'Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage.'*

*Education Scotland*

#### 3.3.1 The Education Service will:

- provide professional learning opportunities for staff on effective approaches to family learning and parental engagement;
- evaluate the impact of parental engagement and family learning in order to inform developments;

- ensure that good practice and parental involvement and family learning is shared effectively across schools and services;
- facilitate the opportunity for schools and services to share and observe practice within the West Partnership and nationally;
- develop and promote approaches to family learning as part of curricular developments.

### 3.3.2 Schools and services should:

- work with the Parent Council to review and develop the reporting arrangements to ensure that the information provided to parents on their child's progress is clear and supports the next steps in learning;
- consult with parents on the suitability and purpose of homework on a regular basis and take an evidence based approach to the setting of homework;
- ensure that the purpose of homework is clear and appropriate for the age and stage of the child;
- ensure that in the primary stages, homework has a family learning approach rather than routine, rote tasks;
- ensure that parents are informed and supported to enable them to support their child's learning in a fun and enjoyable way;
- provide parents with information to support their children's learning through training websites ,e.g. Scottish Parent Teacher Council website
- encourage and track learning outside of school;
- monitor the approaches taken to involve parents to ensure that they are effective and inclusive;
- engage with partners to offer support for parents on a variety of needs/issues;