

PARENT COUNCIL RESOURCE



Section 4 – Roles and responsibilities

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4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Headteacher's role

The Headteacher has a *right and a duty* to attend Parent Council meetings. The role of the Headteacher is to:

- provide advice, guidance and support for the Parent Council;
- provide regular updates to the Parent Council on what is happening in the setting or school and what plans there are for development and improvement;
- provide information on issues affecting the setting or school;
- provide an annual update to the parent forum;
- be a link with other staff in the setting or school as well as other settings, schools and the local authority;
- support the involvement of pupils in the activities of the Parent Council and make the links to learning and the curriculum;
- provide opportunities for parents to join in activities in the setting or school and plan with the Parent Council about how this can happen;
- work alongside the Parent Council to help support the setting or school.

Parent Councils may find it helpful to have an allocated time slot for the Headteacher at the beginning or end of meetings. It is therefore good practice to discuss the agenda in advance with the Headteacher and ask if he/she has any items that should be included on it.

4.2 Communicating with the parent forum

Communicating with the parent forum is a key aspect of the Parent Council's role. It is crucial that the Parent Council seeks and represents parental views. As a Parent Council you will want to tell parents about what you are discussing and what you intend to do.

There are lots of ways in which settings and schools already communicate effectively with their parent forum. However, parents might have ideas on how to improve these further. Consultation (e.g. a questionnaire, survey or some focus groups with different parents) about the preferred methods of communication, which will work best for the parent forum, is good practice. It is for the Parent Council, in consultation with parents, to consider what range of communication methods will work best for their setting or school.

Methods of communication may include:

- In person – using setting or school events, or creating an event(s) to meet the parent forum and gather their views;
- Written communication – newsletters, posters, noticeboards, flyers, letters, questionnaires;
- Technology – email, website, social media platforms, apps, text messaging, online meetings.

Parent Councils should think about how best to contact parents of children who are about to join the setting or school, or how best to communicate with parents who require translation or alternative communication methods. Consideration should also be given to methods of communicating with parents who live apart but share the care and responsibilities for their child(ren).



Points to consider

- Work with your setting or school to use their established communications methods such as texts messages to parents, social media posts or literature sent home in school bags.
- A newsletter for parents – or if the setting or school already has one, a specific Parent Council update section in the newsletter.
- Eye-catching posters with key information about events displayed in prominent positions in the community – the post office, doctors and dentists waiting rooms and supermarkets.
- Talk to the setting or school about how the Parent Council can communicate with and involve parents for whom English is not their first language or how others can be reached who may have difficulty with the existing communication methods.
- Try using technology to reach parents - if the setting or school has a website, include a Parent Council area featuring news and information; mobile phones; think about setting up a Parent Council website, blog or social media page to keep parents informed and get their comments back.
- Let parents know when and where Parent Council meetings are being held and that these are open for them to attend.
- The Annual Report that the Parent Council makes to parents does not necessarily have to be a formal report but could include photos or video clips of sponsored events (by the Parent Council) and be presented in a more visual way.

4.3 Getting more parents on board

Not all parents in the setting or school will feel comfortable or be able to formally join the Parent Council and/or attend meetings. Some parents may be willing to help out on a more ad-hoc basis. Others, for example, may never consider volunteering themselves but if they are personally approached by a Parent Council member whom they know, they may be willing to help out on a specific task or for a short period of time.

You may find it useful to keep a list of parents' contact details or a register of interests and skills that can be drawn upon when necessary. It is important to note that any information held by the Parent Council must be kept safe and used only for the purpose for which it was given. More information on data protection and records management can be found on Connect's website²⁶.

4.4 Pupil involvement

Don't forget the pupils - they are after all on the front line of learning! The main aim of the Parent Council is to ensure that your setting or school, and learning is the best it can be.

Getting pupils' views, ideas and opinions about their learning experiences can be really enlightening. Pupils can be very helpful in developing priorities and activities. It may be appropriate to have input from pupil representatives at each Parent Council meeting. The Parent Council may be able to meet with the Pupil Council at suitable times throughout the year. Pupils can also help at events and are useful as a channel of communication to parents.

4.5 Other Parent Councils

Meeting up with or sharing information with other Parent Councils in your area can be helpful. Combining resources and expertise on local issues or challenges such as the need for better road safety or improving the quality of school meals can produce excellent results. There may be a shared interest in local events or in working with the same community members.

²⁶ <https://connect.scot/>

4.6 Local authorities

Each local authority has a member of staff whose remit includes responsibility for parental involvement and engagement. Local authorities, settings or schools must provide support to enable Parent Councils to carry out their functions effectively. This might include:

- support with administration which may involve the appointment of a clerk, accommodation or other services e.g. photocopying;
- training support for running the Parent Council;
- training for recruitment of senior staff;
- reasonable financial support to help the Parent Council carry out its functions and to cover travel expenses for members who attend training and meetings. Parents should not incur any personal financial costs.

All local authorities should consult Parent Councils on their strategy to promote parental involvement and engagement. They will also have mechanisms in place to consult Parent Councils on other issues such as school closures, school holidays, changes to catchment areas, etc.

Most local authorities support Parent Councils to come together as a group to share ideas, experiences and issues. Meetings like this can help provide feedback to local authorities on their policies and services. It is worth finding out what happens in your area as this can be a good source of support for the Parent Council as well as an opportunity to exchange knowledge and ideas.

Who else in your local authority can help?

The services below may vary across local authorities. Enquiries should be made to see what is available in your area.

- Community Learning and Development / Home Link teams - have knowledge and experience of supporting community groups and how they run. They may be able to put Parent Councils in touch with training opportunities that are available in the area that will help with the running of a Parent Council e.g. Holding effective meetings or The role of the Chairperson.
- Family Learning teams - are skilled at working with adults as learners and with families. They can support Parent Councils in reaching out to parents who may not find it easy to be involved in setting or school activities. Staff in these teams can suggest activities for parents and children to have fun and learn together.
- Libraries - can be a useful resource in the community to help Parent Councils publicise their events and also support specific activities e.g. a reading club or Family reading week.
- Sports and leisure facilities - often have family activities that can provide opportunities for children and parents. There is usually a Sports Development Officer or Active Schools Co-ordinator in each local authority who may have ideas for Parent Council activities. They may hold events or activities that the Parent Council can encourage parents and children to participate in as part of the Health Promoting Schools initiative.