

# Engaging parents and families

A toolkit for practitioners

Section 10: School improvement planning

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EducationScot



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# Contents

|  | Page      |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. Background.....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| 1.1 School Improvement Planning .....  | 3         |
| <b>2. Developing a process for School Improvement Planning .....</b>                 | <b>4</b>  |
| Activity 1: Collating information .....  | 4         |
| Activity 2: Self-Evaluation .....  | 6         |
| Reflective questions .....   | 6         |
| Activity 3: Process for School Improvement Planning .....                            | 7         |
| Reflective questions .....   | 7         |
| Activity 4: Improvement groups .....   | 8         |
| Reflective questions .....   | 8         |
| Activity 5: Involving parents in Improvement Planning .....                          | 9         |
| Activity 6: Involving children and young people in School Improvement Planning ..... | 11        |
| Activity 7: Implementing and reviewing the School Improvement Plan .....             | 11        |
| Reflective questions .....   | 11        |
| <b>Reading list .....</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Further Information .....</b>   | <b>14</b> |

# 1. Background

This section provides guidance for practitioners in early learning and childcare (ELC) settings and schools who are taking forward improvement planning. It aims to enable practitioners to work collaboratively with parents, children and young people, partners and relevant stakeholders to develop a process for improvement planning, consider self-evaluation processes and implement and review their improvement plan.

## 1.1 School Improvement Planning

‘Parents have their own perspectives on school education and what can be done to improve standards and quality. Schools should foster a positive and open ethos which encourages parents to share these perspectives’.

**(Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act Guidance, 2006)**

School improvement focuses on the quality of education, learning and teaching, assessment as well as the quality of the partnerships that are in place to improve outcomes for children.

School Improvement Planning should be part of a regular on-going cycle of self-evaluation and improvement whereby practitioners use a range of methods to evaluate practice. Reference should also be made to the [National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#), national practice documents (e.g. [Realising the Ambition: Being Me](#); [Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks](#)) and self-evaluation frameworks (e.g. [How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?](#); [How Good is our School?](#) (Fourth Edition); [How Good is our Third Sector Organisation?](#) to identify areas of strength and points for development.

Further information for practitioners is available in [Driving Excellence and Equity: Advice on School Improvement Planning 2017/18](#) and case studies on the [Education Scotland Web Estate](#).

## 2. Developing a process for School Improvement Planning

‘School education is about more than the curriculum and includes the school’s provision for social, cultural and re-creative activities and for physical education and training’.

**(Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act Guidance, 2006)**

Practitioners are encouraged to use a range of data in their School Improvement planning process to focus priorities on raising attainment and close the equity gap for learners. Sources of data could include:

- social, cultural and economic context of the catchment area - Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)
- professional dialogue and reflection
- practitioner enquiry
- neighbourhood statistics
- attainment information
- observation of learning and teaching
- parental and stakeholder feedback
- shared classroom experiences
- cluster moderation
- tracking and monitoring meetings
- self-evaluation evidence
- local and national priorities

### Activity 1: Collating information

#### **Purpose**

To identify ways of collating and analysing data.

Information gathering should be a robust process as this will provide you with the data you need to inform improvements moving forward and to measure impact. A robust process to collate this information can include obtaining data from: the whole school community; partner organisations

or agencies; community learning and development practitioners; local and national improvement plans; research; qualitative data from parents/families/outreach services; and the School Improvement Plan.

After collating the data:

- analyse the findings and triangulate with other sources of intelligence
- ensure the data is robust e.g. from a reasonable representative sample of respondents
- consider if the data is from the whole school community. Are there any anomalies which might suggest that questions have been misunderstood?
- consider what the process/policy on school improvement could look like

Points to consider:

- local contexts may require a different approach
- language barriers especially amongst migrant families and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)
- need to review/change previous methods to take account of new media e.g. social media, Skype
- parental difficulties/challenges e.g. additional support needs, literacy challenges, disabilities, parents who do not live together, families affected by imprisonment. Where barriers are identified, local and national organisations can help the school to address these.

Early learning and childcare settings and schools should consider the self-evaluation exercise in Section 3 of this toolkit.

## Activity 2: Self-Evaluation

### Purpose

To review self-evaluation processes.

The vision, values and aims of the ELC setting or school should be developed in partnership with staff, parents, children and young people, partners and relevant stakeholders to reflect outcomes for children and families and be based on self-evaluation processes. Planned improvements should be relevant, achievable, lead to improved outcomes for learners and link to effective evidence based self-evaluation activities with staff, parents, children, partners and relevant stakeholders.

Rigorous self-evaluation should be undertaken using national self-evaluation frameworks (e.g. [How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?](#); [How Good is our School?](#) (Fourth Edition); [How Good is our Third Sector Organisation?](#) and [Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks](#)) as well as through looking outwards to learn from and share good practice across and from other ELC settings and schools. Practitioners should ensure that there are a wide range of creative approaches to involve staff, parents, children, partners and relevant stakeholders in self-evaluation activities.

### Reflective questions

- Are staff encouraged to develop personal self-evaluation approaches to analyse professional practice?
- Do staff require training and development in self-evaluation approaches?
- Are members of the school community involved in the self-evaluation cycle?

## Activity 3: Process for School Improvement Planning

### Purpose

To review, monitor and evaluate the School Improvement Planning process.

ELC settings and schools should work with their parent group/council and school community to identify and agree priorities for improvement – particularly regarding parental engagement.

### Reflective questions

- Does the School Improvement Plan have a strategic focus with simplified, clear, streamlined, prioritised approaches along with realistic and achievable timescales that lead to improved outcomes for learners?
- Are you using a range of evidence to identify priorities for improvement?
- Are parents and the school community involved in reviewing progress and identifying priorities as part of the School Improvement Planning process and cycle?
- Has the School Improvement Plan been communicated to the wider parent forum, school community, children and young people, staff and partners?
- Has a process been set up to regularly review progress of the School Improvement Plan with stakeholders and discuss/measure the impact on outcomes?
- Is the Standards and Quality report prepared annually for parents to communicate progress on the School Improvement Plan and identify key strengths and areas for improvement?
- Have you ensured that school improvement and reporting documents are in plain English, easily understandable and in 'parent-friendly' language?

## Activity 4: Improvement groups

### Purpose

To consider ways to take improvement forward in ELC settings and schools.

Improvement groups provide opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles for aspects of improvement and to develop a better understanding of how their work contributes to local and national priorities.

Parents should be invited onto these groups to contribute to and lead on aspects of improvement but also to ensure that the parental perspective is taken into account.

### Reflective questions

- Are all staff (including support staff) regularly involved in self-evaluation?
- Are parents regularly involved in the school's on-going self-evaluation cycle?
- Are staff confident in identifying and making effective use of strategies to monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions to improve outcomes?
- Do staff require training and development in using or analysing data e.g. social, cultural and economic context of families?
- Do staff make effective use of self-evaluation to analyse their own professional practice?
- Are staff aware of current education policy both nationally and locally and use these to inform their professional development?
- Do staff engage in academic reading and practitioner enquiry to strengthen understanding of relevant and current national/international research, inform thinking, influence practice and develop professional learning which lead to improvements for children and young people?
- Do staff use creative and innovative approaches to illustrate school improvement work and the school's journey to excellence?
- Is the ELC setting or school's professional review and development process linked to improvement plan priorities?
- Are the outcomes of any professional learning and development monitored and evidenced to show impact on the school improvement?



## Activity 5: Involving parents in Improvement Planning

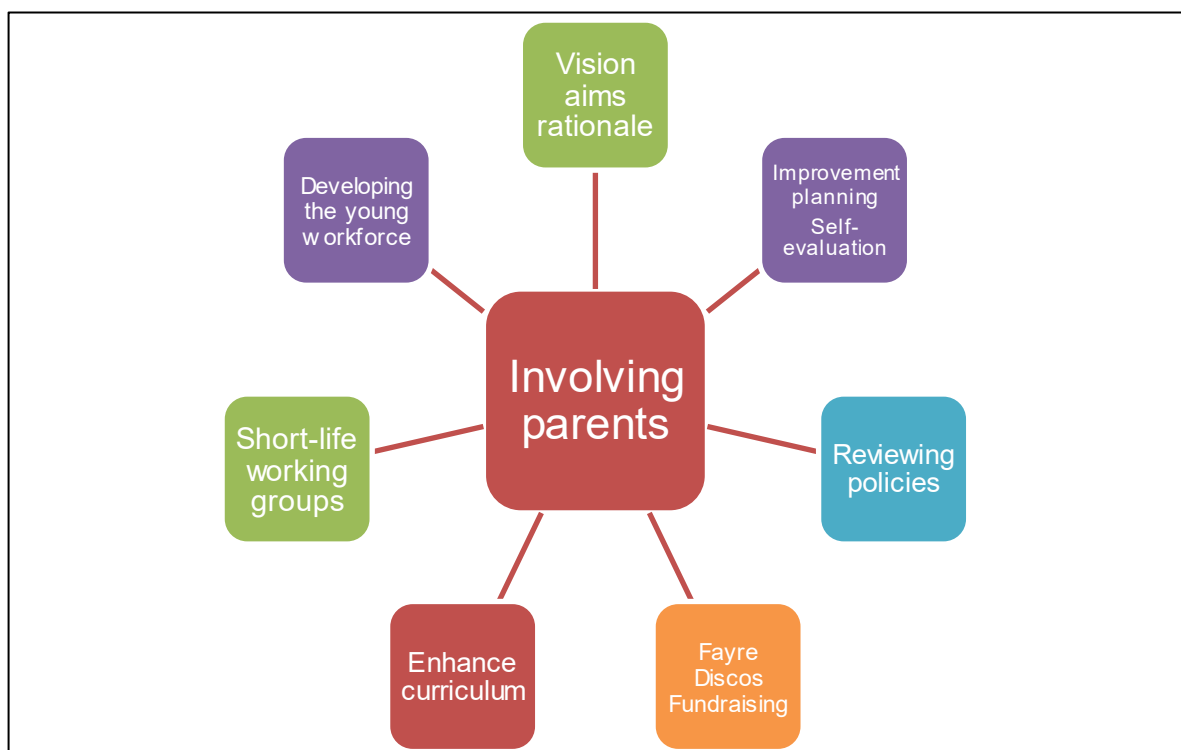
### Purpose

To consider ways to work with parents to increase parental involvement in improvement planning.

Parents often have creative ideas about education and what can be done to improve the standards and quality of their child's learning. ELC settings and schools should foster a positive and open ethos which encourages parents to share these views. Collaborative approaches in partnership with parents can make a positive contribution to how ELC settings, schools and local authorities determine their ambitions and how they plan for improvements to meet these.

Parents have a key role to play in supporting the headteacher and staff in their child's ELC setting or school to help raise standards of education and to secure improvements in the quality of children's learning. The education provided must take account of the whole needs of the child in respect of developing a child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Examples of ways that parents can be involved are shown in the diagram below.



## Reflective questions

- Do you have effective systems in place to gather feedback from parents? Are these systems regularly reviewed and monitored?
- How do you involve parents (including those who have children with additional support needs) to identify priorities for improvement?
- Is training and support provided for parents to help them undertake their role in school improvement? Is this monitored to ensure that parents are not overwhelmed?
- Do you feed back to parents on the results of surveys in an easily accessible format using a variety of media?
- Do parents have opportunities to share in their child's learning through joint learning between home and ELC setting or school?
- Does your ELC setting or school provide opportunities for Family Learning?
- Do you have effective and creative approaches to involving parents to help shape improvements?
- Are parents enabled and empowered to inform/lead identified changes as outlined in the Improvement Plan?
- Are there barriers that prevent parents from becoming involved in school improvement e.g. language, lack of confidence, parents who do not live together? If so, how are these being addressed?

Different methods can be used to gather the views of and communicate with stakeholders.

These can include, but are not limited to:

- carrying out a survey to gather views on school improvement and how best to involve stakeholders;
- meetings of the parent forum; parents evenings; coffee mornings; stay and play sessions; sports days; mass; school performances; information events; open evenings; weekly drop-in surgery; blogs; social media; and the school website.

## Activity 6: Involving children and young people in School Improvement Planning

### Purpose

To consider ways of working with children and young people to increase participation in improvement planning.

Children and young people should be engaged in self-evaluation activities. They should understand what the results of those activities are and how it will influence school improvement. Children and young people should be encouraged to articulate clearly how their contribution makes a difference to improvement planning.

Practitioners should develop effective and creative approaches to support the involvement of children and young people in school improvement planning. ELC settings and schools should ensure that children and young people are enabled and empowered to inform and lead change to help shape improvements. Children should be encouraged to create their own plans to improve their school and evaluate their successes at regular meetings.

## Activity 7: Implementing and reviewing the School Improvement Plan

### Purpose

To effectively communicate the Improvement Plan to relevant stakeholders.

Once the Improvement Plan has been developed and agreed, the next steps are to inform all parents, children and partners. Explanation should be given that the Improvement Plan is undertaken annually as part of an on-going self-evaluation planning cycle and that progress on the actions are published in the Standards and Quality Report.

### Reflective questions

- What are the most effective methods of communicating with your parents and families on the Improvement Plan?
- Will digital communication methods exclude parents in your ELC setting or school?

- What is the best way to communicate with children and young people regarding the School Improvement Plan?
- What are the best methods of communicating with your school community and partner organisations regarding the Improvement Plan?

# Reading list

Scottish Executive (2006), '*Scottish Schools (Parental involvement) Act 2006 Guidance*'.  
Edinburgh. Astron.

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2006/09/08094112/0>

# Further Information

[Driving Excellence and Equity: Advice on School Improvement Planning 2017/18](#)

[National Improvement Framework: Improvement planning and reporting poster](#)

[National Improvement Framework Parent Communication Plan](#)

[Parentzone Scotland](#)

[Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006 Guidance](#)

[Tackling bureaucracy](#)

[Review of the Impact of the Parental Involvement Act \(2006\)](#)

[Ipsos Mori - Research to inform the Review of the Impact of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act](#)

[How good is our school? \(Fourth edition\)](#)

[How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?](#)

[How Good is our Third Sector Organisation?](#)

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