

PARENT COUNCIL RESOURCE



Section 2 – What is the role of the parent forum and the Parent Council?

This section covers:

2. What is the role of the parent forum and the Parent Council?
 - 2.1 Parent forum
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2. What is the role of the parent forum and the Parent Council?

2.1 Parent forum

Membership of a parent forum consists of parents who have a child at a local authority school. Parents are automatically members of the parent forum for their child's school and it is important they are informed and know about this.

As a member of the parent forum, each parent can expect to:

- receive information about the setting or school and its activities;
- hear about what partnership with parents means in their setting or school;
- be involved in ways and times that suit them;
- participate in deciding how the Parent Council (or parent representative body) is organised and how it operates;
- identify issues they want the Parent Council to work on with the setting or school;
- be asked their opinion by the Parent Council on issues relating to the setting or school and the education it provides;
- work in partnership with staff at the setting or school;
- enjoy taking part in the wider life of the setting or school in whatever way they can.



One of the ways parents in the parent forum will be able to express their views is through the Parent Council.

2.2 Parent Council

Parent Councils are constituted bodies who are independent from the school and the local authority. As an independent body, Parent Councils are designed to be flexible but their main functions are to:

- work in partnership with the setting or school to decide on the key priorities to take forward;
- ensure that your setting or school, and learning is the best it can be;
- come to decisions which everyone is happy with or has had an opportunity to debate and discuss;
- benefit from the ideas, skills, knowledge, and opinions of all members;
- provide a voice for parents in settings or schools and in their local authority on issues that are important to them;
- improve the setting or school's understanding of how to engage parents in their children's learning and in the wider life of the school;
- support the setting or school to develop strong home/school partnerships;
- communicate regularly with the parent forum to hear their views and keep them informed;
- self-evaluate to inform improvement planning. Discuss the setting or school's strengths and areas for development from a parental perspective;
- help make links with the wider community;
- capture the unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience that parents can offer;
- gather and represent the views of parents to the Headteacher, local authority and HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE);
- promote contact between the setting or school, parents, pupils, providers of early learning and childcare and the local community;

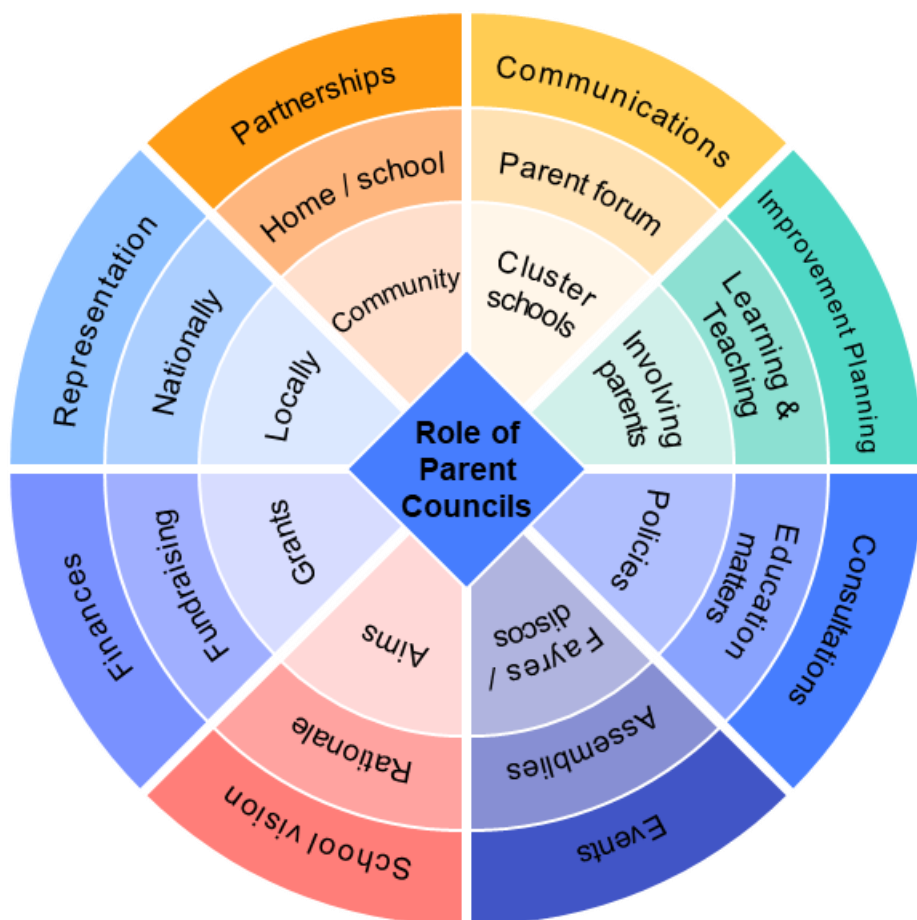
- fundraise in collaboration with the setting or school for the benefit of all pupils and families;
- apply for grants and seek out funding sources;
- organise events;
- play an active role in the recruitment of Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher appointments;
- contribute to the annual update of the School Handbook;
- contribute to school inspections;
- help with or undertake setting or school consultations;
- conduct business efficiently in accordance with the Constitution.

Parent Councils may want to support events and activities where families and children can learn and have fun together.

Learning can begin in settings or schools and continue at home or vice-versa. Information and support can help parents make the most of family activities to help children learn and develop.

Communication with parents is a key part of the Parent Council's role. Parent Council members work as volunteers on behalf of all parents on educational matters that are of importance to all.

When communicating with the parent forum, Parent Councils may want to ask which methods work best for them, e.g. email, written notes, drop-in mornings, text messages, focus group discussion, social media platforms, or online meetings. This will enable Parent Councils to speak to the setting, school and the local authority about the views of parents on issues that affect the setting or school.



Members of the Parent Council do not get involved in individual matters relating to any specific member of staff, pupil, or family. It may be possible to draw a general issue for consideration by the Parent Council from a specific concern without making reference to it e.g. what is the school's homework policy? What is the school's Anti-Bullying Policy? All individual matters should be referred to the Headteacher.

A Parent Council can decide on the type of group they want to represent the views of their learning community and interests. Parent Councils may decide that they want a representative from each year group in the school and include pupils, teachers at the school, or parents from a feeder primary or secondary school. This flexibility allows for a Parent Council which reflects its setting or school and which will encourage parents to get involved.

Parent Councils have an important role to play in helping ensure parents' unique knowledge of their own child, their valuable life experience and individual personal skills help enrich all children's education in their setting or school. One way that Parent Councils can do this is by helping parents to feed in their views and ideas, ensuring their input makes a positive difference to the life and work of the setting or school.

Pupil Equity Funding

Settings and schools should 'consult and engage effectively with teachers, parents and carers, children and young people and the wider community when implementing approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap..... Teachers, parents and carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders should be meaningfully involved throughout the processes of planning, implementing and evaluating approaches'¹⁶.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a way for people to directly vote on how money in their setting or school should be spent. Ideas are generated about how a budget should be spent, people then vote for their priorities and the projects with the most votes gets funded. Participatory budgeting is an effective way to engage with parents and pupils¹⁷.

Cost of the School Day Toolkit

This Toolkit is designed to get everyone talking about the Cost of the School Day. It helps everyone in the setting or school and the wider learning community to join the discussion and have input into making Cost of the School Day changes. Every setting and school is unique and the Toolkit will help Parent Councils to develop plans that reflect their local community and context.

The Toolkit sets out the Cost of the School Day process in five straightforward steps. It features:

- editable action plans
- updated information
- resources to facilitate whole school conversations about the barriers that costs create and how to tackle them
- practice suggestions

Further information can be found on the Child Poverty Action Group's website¹⁸.

2.3 The Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations (2007)

The Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments Regulations (2007) makes provision for Parent Councils to play an active role in the recruitment process for appointing Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers of their child's school. Where this is the case, the local authority will involve the Parent Council in all stages of the process and will provide training to support members through this process.

Further information can be found in the Statutory Guidance¹⁹ to the Parental Involvement Act and the Appointments Regulations²⁰.

¹⁶ Pupil Equity Fund National Operational Guidance 2022 - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-equity-fund-national-operational-guidance-2022/documents/>

¹⁷ <https://pbscotland.scot/pb-in-schools>

¹⁸ <https://cpag.org.uk/cost-school-day-toolkit-updated-2021>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-scottish-schools-parental-involvement-act-2006/>

²⁰ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2007/132/made>

What it looks like when things go well

- The Parent Council communicates with the parent forum in ways that work for parents.
- Parents know who to contact on the Parent Council and in the setting or school if they want to share views or have a query.
- Parents and the setting or school work together to support the health and wellbeing of children.
- Parents get lots of encouragement from the setting or school to take part in their children's learning – and there is evidence that they do take part.
- Settings, schools and teachers keep parents informed of what their children will be learning so that they can discuss this with their children at home.
- Parents and staff tackle areas of difficulty and concern together.
- Settings and schools provide specific fun activities for children and parents to do at home.
- Parents support their children's learning by helping with learning at home activities, homework and making links with other areas of school work.
- Parents spend one-to-one time with their children and also enjoy shared family activities and visits.
- Parents and children know that everyone's contribution is valued.
- Children receive additional support from the individual attention they get from their parents.
- The ways of communicating with parents reflect the diversity of parents and their needs.
- There are open channels of communication so that parents feel comfortable talking to staff.
- Parents are made aware of how their children's learning can be supported at home.
- Teachers discuss with parents and children the activities they undertake at home so that these can be incorporated into their learning in school.

Reflective questions

- Does the Parent Council make parents aware of their membership of the parent forum?
- Do Parent Council members have a general knowledge of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home?
- Are Parent Council members able to promote parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home when representing the views of parents at a local or national level?
- Is the Parent Council able to identify what it needs to carry out its functions and access appropriate training, information and/or resources?
- Does the Parent Council ascertain the views of the wider parent forum?

