

# Renfrewshire Council : Education and Leisure Services

## Strategy for Parental Involvement

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Education and Leisure Services in Renfrewshire, like all other local authorities in Scotland, has prepared this strategy for parental involvement as a result of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 and to respond to the new duty within the act to:

- involve parents\* in their own child's education and that provided by a school to its pupils generally;
- give advice and information to parents in respect of their own child\*\*;
- promote the establishment of parent councils in schools and support their operation; and
- establish a complaints procedure for their duties under the act.

1.2 Our head teachers have an important role to play within the strategy and the notes which have been provided for head teachers explain this in more detail.

1.3 The involvement of parents in their own child's education and the education provided by a school to its pupils generally depend on effective engagement with parents through:

- supporting learning at home;
- developing strong partnerships between home and school; and
- encouraging parental representation in the school generally and in the appointment of senior staff in particular.

1.4 The strategy recognises that not all parents find it easy to become involved in their child's education and offers specific advice in section 4 which builds on our current good practice.

1.5 The fundamental importance of the entitlement of the individual child to be supported in learning and in personal and social development is central to the strategy and complements our key policies on the Education of Looked After Children and Young People and Pupils with Additional Support Needs. Also relevant are policies to support and further develop equalities issues, integrated children's service delivery, a Curriculum for Excellence, early years education, consulting with children and customer care.

\* the term parent refers to parents and carers

\*\* the term child includes children from pre-school age to those in secondary school education

## **2. Parental Involvement in Children's Learning**

- 2.1 There are three main ways parents can get involved in supporting their children's learning:
- Learning at home: Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and, as such, should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home, in the community and at school;
  - Home / school partnership: Schools must be open to the involvement of parents in the work they do and they should find ways of providing information that helps parents engage with the school and their children's education;
  - Parental representation: The act provides a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy matters affecting the education of their children. 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, education authority and others through a representative parent council for the school.
- 2.2 There are clear benefits to children, parents, schools and the education authority as the result of getting parents involved in their child's education.
- 2.3 Within recognised good practice at local and national level, parents have a central role both as partners in their children's learning and in the wider life and work of the school. The school and the authority make use of parents' skills and knowledge to contribute to developing this role and to developing links with the local community.

## **3. Advice and Information to Parents**

- 3.1 Education authorities must respond to any reasonable request for advice and information from the parent of any child attending one of their schools on the education their child is receiving. They must also take steps to ensure that the head teacher and staff of the school are available to give advice and information to the parent.
- 3.2 Schools should have a clear policy for supporting parents with their own child's education and learning. Schools and parents often find that having a variety of methods for sharing information and communicating with parents makes two-way communication more effective and makes it easier for parents to know what is going on and to keep in touch, for example, through:
- phone calls and text messaging;
  - letters and newsletters;

- face to face informal contact;
- e-mails and websites; and
- parent information evenings and parent workshops.

3.3 School reports provide a range of information to parents, including information about their children's progress in their personal and social development, attainment and achievement. Reporting should involve the sharing of information by parents and the school. Reports set out the school's views of learners' strengths and development needs as a basis for dialogue with parents. These reports need to be informative and helpful. They should provide an accurate reflection of individual children.

3.4 Reporting arrangements should take account of parents' views and needs, particularly in relation to the frequency and level of detail. Schools should facilitate and encourage parents to access more detailed or more regular information if they seek it. Schools will have arrangements for face-to-face discussion between parents and appropriate school staff. Staff and parents should have time to talk and listen to each other in a pleasant climate. Schools also need to make sure that the arrangements for such meetings, including timings and venues, are suitably flexible to meet parents' varying circumstances and needs.

3.5 Parents should be able to contribute useful information on their children's progress to the school. The effective, two-way sharing of information is essential to a partnership which fully empowers parents in supporting children's learning.

3.6 Parents already have the right to access their child's school records, except in certain circumstances, such as situations where allowing access to the record might put another person at risk.

3.7 Parents should also be involved in the personal learning planning process to promote dialogue between pupils, parents and teachers. Schools may:

- invite parents to be part of the early planning stages, when parents and their child will get the opportunity to discuss suitable learning goals with the teacher;
- provide parents with the opportunity to discuss their child's learning goals at parent's evenings; and
- arrange additional opportunities for parents to meet the teacher to discuss their child's achievements and next steps for learning.

#### **4 Breaking Down Barriers to Parental Involvement**

4.1 The commitment by schools and the authority to overcoming barriers to parental involvement is embedded in our current good practice which has been acknowledged at national and local level through:

- the role of the homelink service;
  - the parent enabler programme;
  - approaches to facilitation and mediation;
  - the role of the English as an additional language team;
  - the role of the community learning and development service; and
  - joint working with key partners, for example social work, health, housing and the police.
- 4.2 Our policy on the Education of Looked After Children and Young People offers detailed advice on the importance of involving the parents of looked after children and young people and approaches to supporting the involvement of parents. Detailed advice is also offered to acknowledge the important role of carers to provide an appropriate agenda to strengthen home / school partnership.
- 4.3 Full parental involvement is a fundamental principle of our policy for the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act and specific advice is included to ensure partnership with parents.
- 4.4 Key links to policy and practice on the full range of equalities issues, as defined in legislation, are also a significant feature of our strategy to ensure that it promotes equal opportunities.
- 4.5 The strategy acknowledges the authority's duty to promote and support the involvement of all parents, including those who do not live with their children or whose children are educated outwith Renfrewshire. This principle will be supported by current arrangements for quality assurance procedures and review of placements outwith the authority.
- 4.6 We recognise, however, that the level of involvement by parents can be subject to the constraints of available time.

## **5. Pre-School Service**

- 5.1 Our strategy acknowledges the very good practice that exists in relation to parental involvement in education and learning in the early years and pre-school service. We hope that parent groups will continue to make a very effective contribution.
- 5.2 The process for the transfer of information between local nurseries and primary schools and the strong relationship with partner nursery providers will support effective engagement with parents of children coming into primary education.
- 5.3 The parents of children enrolled in a school who are under school age are automatically members of the parent forum of the primary school. The head teacher and parent council of the school in question will be responsible for promoting contact with parents of prospective pupils.

## **6. Promoting and Supporting Parent Councils**

The guidance notes for headteachers, prepared by the authority, offer comprehensive advice on:

- parental involvement;
- barriers to involvement;
- the role of the headteacher;
- advice selected from the Scottish Executive's guidance;
- the parent forum;
- the role and functions of the parent council;
- a draft sample constitution; and
- a draft scheme for establishing parent councils.

Reference is also made to useful sections of the Scottish Executive's toolkit.

## **7. Complaints Procedure**

- 7.1 Our current complaints procedure has been reviewed for further consultation with parent councils to ensure that it meets the requirements of the act and parents' needs.

## **8. Approaches to Self-Evaluation**

- 8.1 We will continue to build on the collaborative work we have successfully undertaken so far to implement the Scottish Executive's national toolkit and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education's quality indicators on "How Good is our Partnership with Parents". Work with parent focus groups, supported by community learning and development and the homelink service, and the full participation of parents in meetings and seminars with authority personnel and heads of establishments will continue to develop links with the authority's structure for pupil councils.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

- 9.1 Guidance will be provided to all schools to ensure that their school improvement plan takes account of the authority's strategy for parental involvement.
- 9.2 Once our strategy is approved by parent councils it will be reviewed within a three year period.
- 9.3 When reviewing our strategy, we will seek and take account of the views of parents, pupils, key partners and the wider community.

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