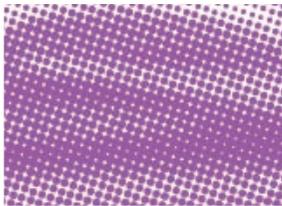


Making the difference

A new law to support parents



Parents, carers and family members are by far the most important influences on children's lives. After all, between the ages of 5 and 16 children spend only 15% of their time in school! Research shows that when parents are involved in their child's learning, children do better at school and throughout life. This leaflet tells you about changes that have been made to the law to help parents and schools work together as partners in children's learning.



A new approach to involvement

Because parents have such a vital role to play in their children's education, the Scottish Parliament has passed a new law called the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 – to encourage and support more parents to become involved.

Most schools are already working very hard to involve parents, but the Act makes it a top priority for every education authority and every school to support the involvement of parents:

- ▶ at home – by providing them with information on what their children are learning at school and how this can best be supported at home
- ▶ through school – by providing them with opportunities to contribute to the life of the school e.g. by helping out in the classroom, on school trips and at school events
- ▶ in a more formal way – by helping them to decide what kind of parent group the school should have.

What parents have said

Parents are clear about what help they want to support their child's learning. You want good opportunities to express your views, to raise issues that are important to you and your child, to get a proper response to your requests and questions and to know more about what goes on in schools. The law makes it easier for you to do all of this.

What does the law say?

The main aims of the Parental Involvement Act (the new law) are to:

- ▶ help parents become more involved with their child's education and learning
- ▶ welcome parents as active participants in the life of the school
- ▶ provide easier ways for parents to express their views and wishes.

To help achieve these aims, **all** parents will automatically be members of the Parent Forum at their child's school and will be entitled to have a say in what happens at the school.

What does being a member of the Parent Forum mean?

As a member you can expect to:

- ▶ get information about what your child is learning
- ▶ get information about events and activities at the school
- ▶ get advice/help on how you can support your child's learning
- ▶ be told about opportunities to be involved in the school
- ▶ have a say in selecting a Parent Council to work on behalf of all parents at your school.

What is a Parent Council?

Your school's new Parent Council will be very parent-friendly – it's a great opportunity to become more involved!

The role of a Parent Council is to:

- ▶ support the school in its work with pupils
- ▶ represent the views of all parents
- ▶ encourage links between the school, parents, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community
- ▶ report back to the Parent Forum.



Your school's new Parent Council will be recognised in law from August 2007, so it will have a loud voice. The school and the local authority must listen to what your Parent Council says and give it a proper response. Every school's Parent Council will be different because it will be **parents** in each school who decide such things as:

- ▶ how their Council will be set up
- ▶ what it should be called
- ▶ what size it should be – e.g. in a very small primary school, all parents could be involved
- ▶ who should be a member of the Parent Council
- ▶ how they should be appointed
- ▶ when the most convenient time is to hold meetings
- ▶ what will be discussed at meetings – these might be topics such as school uniform, parking near the school, the school's anti-bullying policy, etc.

There will be a chance to take part in setting up your school's new Parent Council between now and July 2007. Look out for information about how you can put forward your views about what would work best for your school.

Where can I get more information?

You can find out more about the Parental Involvement Act and how it supports the role of parents as partners in their children's learning by:

- ▶ using the *Parents as partners in their children's learning Toolkit*. This toolkit has been sent to every school, school board and PTA. It contains checklists and activities to help parents and schools look at how they can work together
- ▶ asking the headteacher or your child's teacher about what you can do to support your child's learning or how you can get more involved with the school
- ▶ asking the school board or PTA what the arrangements are for developing the new Parent Council.

You can find more information about parents as partners in children's learning, or any aspect of Scottish education, on Parentzone.

www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

8 out of 10 parents think that parents should decide how their school's Parent Council is organised and what it should discuss.

(Recent MORI poll)



7 out of 10 parents are not involved in any kind of activity at their child's school, and almost half would like to be more involved.

(Recent MORI poll)



Useful links and contacts

Parentzone www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

BBC Parents www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

One Parent Families Scotland www.opfs.org.uk
Tel: 0800 018 5026

Parentscentre www.parentscentre.gov.uk

ParentLine Scotland www.children1st.org.uk/parentline
Tel: 0808 800 2222

Parent Network Scotland www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk
Tel: 0131 555 6780

Enquire (The Scottish advice service for additional support for learning)
Helpline: 0845 123 23 03 Textphone: 0131 222 2439 www.enquire.org.uk

This leaflet is the twelfth in a series which highlights the real difference parents can and do make to their children's learning. Together with the local advice you will have on the arrangements in your child's school, this series will offer information to help you become better involved in your child's education. Other published leaflets are: Homework, Sharing information, Parents' evenings, School holidays, Starting a new school year, Out of school learning, Healthy choices, Enterprise in education, New technology in learning, Getting involved in your child's school and Personal learning planning. The series also includes materials for schools and teachers on these topics.

If you would like to contact us, or suggest topics for future leaflets, please visit www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk. This leaflet will be available in community languages and alternative formats from your child's school and the Parentzone website.

This series is prepared in partnership with the Quality in Education Centre (University of Strathclyde) and Children in Scotland.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE