

welcome to the
Parent council



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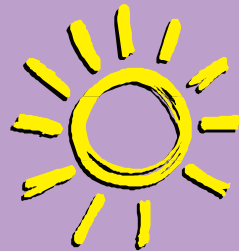
Welcome to the Parent Council

Thank you for agreeing to be a member of your school's Parent Council. The time and effort you give is much appreciated and will make a difference to your school and the education that it provides for all its pupils.

The leaflets in this pack are designed to answer some of the questions you may have about Parent Councils and help you to make your Parent Council work well. If you have been involved with a School Board or PTA before, some of this information may be familiar to you – but there will also be some new ideas that will help you develop your Parent Council. If this is your first time on a parent group these leaflets will give you some basic information and quickly help you take part in discussions and decision making.

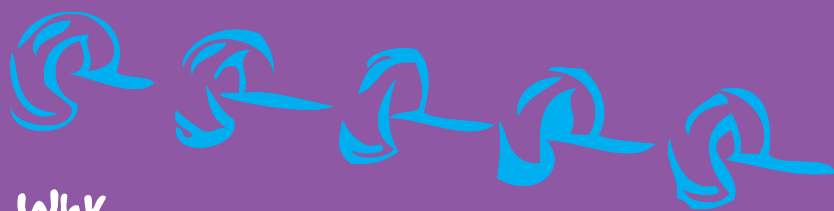


How this pack can help



This pack contains information and ideas to help you make your Parent Council effective. This includes:

- > **Welcome to the Parent Council** - an introduction to Parent Councils and the difference parents make.
- > **What do you want to achieve?** – developing a plan of activities that will make a difference in the school.
- > **Getting started** – ideas for making a success of that all important first meeting of the Parent Council.
- > **Getting the most from your Parent Council** – making the most of the skills, interests, knowledge and experiences of the Parent Council and other parents.
- > **Help and support** – what help and support can you expect from the school, headteacher, local authority and co-opted members.
- > **Helping more parents get involved** – the importance of communicating with parents and gaining their views in a range of different ways and making it possible for everyone to contribute in the way that suits them best.
- > **Working together** – making sure that your meetings are effective and developing good partnership working.
- > **Roles of office bearers** – some common roles and tasks.
- > **Finding out more** – useful information, resources, organisations and websites that will help to answer any other questions you may have.



Why are you here?

- > Because parents are important and make a real difference to children's learning – when parents are involved children and young people do better and achieve more
- > To work together with everyone involved in school life – parents, learners, teachers, school staff and the wider community – to support the school
- > To make sure that all parents have a say in their children's education – and are able to express their views and wishes
- > To build links and involve parents with the wider learning community – nurseries and pre-school groups, other schools and services
- > To listen to what parents want the Parent Council to do and report back to the Parent Forum on your activities and how they can get involved.

How your Parent Council can make the difference

Learning begins (and continues) at home

Parents and families are children's first teachers and continue to make a difference to children's learning as they grow older. Information and support can help parents make the most of family activities to help children learn and develop. How can you help parents help their children? As a Parent Council you may want to support events and activities where families and children can learn and have fun together.

Parents and Schools as Partners

There are lots of ways in which schools, parents, families and the community can work together to give children and young people the best possible education. Schools are most effective when they develop positive relationships with parents and the community they serve. How can the Parent Council support these relationships and work with the school to achieve its objectives and make improvements where needed? You may want to consider your school's development plan and think about your own activities to support those of the school.

Giving parents a voice

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 gives parents the right to receive information about their children's education and to be represented and have their views expressed through the Parent Council. There can be many ways of gaining the views of parents and finding out what is important to them. There is a Toolkit to help your Parent Council discover parents' views and think about what the important issues are for your school.

Ideas to help parents get involved



At the end of each leaflet you will find a list of areas of the 'Parents as Partners in their Children's Learning Toolkit' which might be useful to look at. The Toolkit provides ideas of ways to get parents involved in their child's learning. A copy has been sent to each Parent Council. It can also be found on the Parentzone website at www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

All of the checklists and activities in the Toolkit can be downloaded in 'Word' format which means that you can alter and adapt them or add your own school logo to suit your own needs.

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what do you
want to achieve?



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What do you want to achieve?

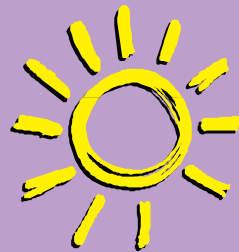
The Parent Council is what you and the Parent Forum want to make of it. Parents can decide what is most important for you to work on at your school.

The main functions of your Parent Council are to:

- > Support the school in its work with pupils and parents
- > Represent the views of parents
- > Promote contact and communication between the school, parents, pupils, the community, nursery and other providers
- > Report to the Parent Forum.



Agreeing your priorities



Once you have your basic arrangements worked out - see the leaflet in this pack called 'Getting Started' - the next step is to agree as a group what you want to achieve and the different ways you want to work.

- > If you haven't already done so, you may want to carry out a survey of parents' views to discover what their priorities are.
- > Does the school development/improvement plan identify any issues that need further discussion with parents or ideas for activities, fundraising and joint working with the school?
- > You may want to think about what you can do to support activities already planned and the work of the headteacher and staff.
- > Some parent groups have found it useful to develop their own plan for a year ahead linking in with what will be happening in the school.

You don't have to do everything all at once! Be realistic in what you think you can achieve and prioritise the issues that you work on. Take it one step at a time and don't overstretch yourselves.

Once you have agreed your priorities you will want to think about how you are going to achieve them. You may divide into subgroups or try to gain the support of other parents and involve them in specific activities.

Ideas to support parents

In discussions with the headteacher at the Parent Council meetings you can identify ways of working together to help parents to make the most out of learning opportunities in the home and community.

- > You could work with the school to develop information that explains new developments in the curriculum and how children are being taught and how parents can be involved.
- > You could discuss the homework policy with staff and think about ways in which it can be made more relevant to parents. Maybe workshops could be run for parents to explain what they can do to help.

Ideas to support the school

- > The Parent Council can support the school in the events that it holds for parents, e.g. parent meetings, concerts, seasonal events. You can make sure that parents are encouraged to come along to these events and that they meet the needs of parents – e.g. that they are held at venues and at times suitable for parents.
- > There may be some parents who find it difficult to join in with activities in school for a variety of reasons. The leaflet 'Helping more parents get involved' has some ideas on involving all parents.
- > One very practical way to support the school and which can involve a larger number of parents is through fundraising activities. These can be as much about involvement and providing an opportunity for parents and staff to work together as they are about raising funds. **They are also good fun!**

If you have a separate PTA you can work together to support each others activities.



Giving parents a voice

Communication with parents is a key area of the Parent Council's work so that you are able to speak to the school and the authority about parents' views on issues that affect the school. You may want to ask parents which methods work best for them, e.g. email, written notes, drop-in mornings, texts to their mobile phone, focus group discussion. See the 'Helping more parents get involved' leaflet in this pack for more information.

You may want to think about how you can contact parents of children who are about to join the school.

You will also have a say in the appointment of a new headteacher or deputy at the school. When this is the case the local authority will involve you in all stages of the process and can provide training to support you.

How ^{can} the Toolkit help?



Ideas to support parents – Section 3 of the Toolkit has ideas on helping parents support children's learning at home, with activities (pages 32 and 35) to help in reviewing your school's homework policy and supporting learning at home.

Ideas to support the school - Section 4 of the Toolkit sets out ideas about improving home-school partnerships.

The activities on pages 18-20 and in Section 4 will help you to run a survey of parents. Remember, many parents may feel more comfortable about being asked as part of a conversation rather than filling in a questionnaire.

Giving parents a voice – pages 72-73 of Section 6 of the Toolkit give examples of running events to help parents have their say.

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Getting started the practicalities



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Getting started the practicalities

This leaflet has suggestions for that all-important first meeting of the Parent Council.

Introductions

Some of you may know each other already and have worked together before on the School Board or PTA but there will probably be new parents involved for the first time. Introductions will be important. One way of doing this might be to ask people to simply say:

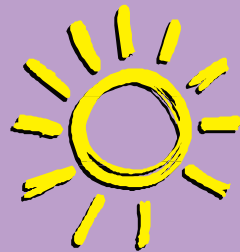
- > Their name
- > Which class or classes their child or children are in
- > One thing they really like about the school
- > One thing they would like to find out more about
- > One thing they hope the Parent Council might achieve.

Selecting office bearers

The first task will be to agree which officers you need (your constitution may state this) and to agree these. Until a chair is agreed the headteacher of the school, or the chair of the working group that set up the Parent Council, may take the chair just to get things started. Once you have selected your office bearers the new chairperson for the Parent Council, who must be a parent of a child at the school, can run the rest of the meeting.



Agenda ideas for first meeting



Below are some suggested agenda items for your first meeting to get you up and running. There's a lot to get through so you might want to have a tea break at some point.

What do you want to achieve?

- > This is likely to take up most of the meeting. You may want to think about doing this in small groups first, drawing on information from the school or your own experiences to identify a range of topics and putting these up around the room. Have a tea break – a chance to get to know each other and for people to consider the issues identified in small group discussion. Everyone can then come together to select the five issues they consider most important. See the leaflet in this pack called 'What do you want to achieve?' for more information.

How do you want to work?

- > If you have a long list of priorities and a range of issues you want to tackle you may consider setting up sub groups as a way of getting things done. These groups can also allow different members of the Parent Council to work on the things that interest them most or that they feel they can contribute to most usefully. Other parents can also be invited to join sub groups to support the work of Parent Council members.

co-opted members

- > Does your constitution allow for co-opted members? If so, think about what you want to achieve and who, within the number allowed, you could co-opt to help you? You may wish to invite school staff, both teachers and support staff. Denominational schools will have someone nominated by the church as a co-opted member. Inviting a 'prospective parent' on to the Council can provide continuity and ensure that there is a link to parents whose children may be coming to the school soon. Once you have decided who to invite the Secretary/clerk can be asked to write and invite them to the next meeting.

Practical support

- > Do any members need practical help such as childcare or transport to help them attend meetings? You may want to think about these when discussing your budget needs for the Parent Council with the local authority. What practical secretarial support can the local authority or school offer to the Parent Council? See the leaflet on 'Roles of office bearers' if you are thinking about appointing a clerk.

Setting up a bank account

- > If you have selected a treasurer this is something that you may want to ask them to do. If you are combining a PTA into your Parent Council there is guidance on how to do this from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC). You will need to agree who the signatories are going to be.

future meetings

- > How frequently do you think you will need to meet?
You might want to do some long term planning and think about what you might want to discuss at future meetings. It will also be important to set dates for future meetings that are suitable for everyone so that these are in diaries well in advance. If there is difficulty agreeing a time or day that suits everybody you may want to think about varying these at alternate meetings – you can be flexible about this. If there are specific people who you think can help you that you might want to invite to future meetings, give them plenty of notice.



Remember,
everything does
not have to be
done at once.
Don't forget to
have fun!!

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Getting the most from your Parent council



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Getting the most from your Parent Council

Everyone on the Parent Council will bring something different and something useful to help you be successful. There may also be others; parents, grandparents, relatives, community members and local authority staff who can help you with your work. Identifying the particular skills that you need and finding out who has these will be important and help you to make the most of everyone's contribution.

Working with others on the Parent Council can also be a way of learning from other people and developing new skills.

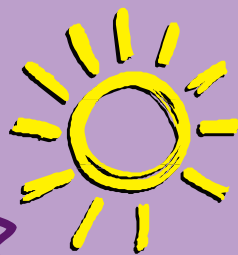
What do parents bring?

Parents:

- > Are experts on their own children and bring this information and knowledge about their children's needs
- > Have unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience
- > Are members of their local community and have links (e.g. with businesses, shops and services) that the school may not have
- > Are in touch with other parents (members of the Parent Forum) and can represent a wider range of views.

What does

the headteacher bring?



The headteacher, or sometimes someone standing in for the headteacher, will always attend Parent Council meetings and be there to give encouragement and guidance.

The headteacher:

- > Will keep the Parent Council informed on what is happening in the school and what plans there are for development and improvement
- > Can support the involvement of pupils in the activities of the Parent Council and make the links to learning and the curriculum
- > Can provide opportunities for parents to join in school activities and plan with the Parent Council how this can happen
- > Will work alongside the Parent Council to help you support the school
- > Provides a link with other staff in the school and the authority.

what others can bring—

Co-opted members:

The constitution for your Parent Council may include a certain number of co-optees. Co-opted members:

- > Can contribute wider experience and knowledge relevant to the local community
- > Can provide a link with parents of children who are about to join the school
- > May have specialist skills or knowledge they can bring to the Parent Council

For some topics you can invite people with particular expertise, e.g. local councillors, school nurses, or architect for a new school.

Not forgetting pupils!

After all they are what it's all about and by talking to them you can learn a lot about their interests and priorities that can help you in planning your events and get them on your side. Pupils:

- > Have direct access to parents and can be a good channel of communication
- > Have strong views, from first-hand experience, of what they feel needs to change to make their school better



- > Can be encouraged, with the support of staff, to take part in activities with the Parent Council as part of the curriculum and may be able to help with devising and carrying out surveys of parents' views or using communication skills learnt in class
- > Can be a 'magnet' for encouraging parents to join in school activities
- > Who are on the Pupil Council can help with communicating with all pupils.

Beyond the Parent council

One of the main purposes of the Parent Council is to support the involvement of parents in ways that suit them best. This may be through events, subgroups, responding to surveys, helping their children at home or getting involved in the school. Be on the look out for parents with particular expertise that can support the school from web design to woodwork!

There may be lots of other people – grandparents, older brothers or sisters, other relatives – who also have a lot to offer the school and can support learning. Grandparents in particular have a wealth of experience, skills and knowledge to offer – and most importantly, many of them also have time to volunteer and get involved (subject to the usual disclosure checks if necessary).



How can the Toolkit help?

The Toolkit offers advice and activities to help with a number of areas in this leaflet.

Identifying skills - the activity on page 50 of the Toolkit describes the use of a skills and strengths poster to help you to discover and share your own strengths as well as finding out about those of other people.

Co-optees - there is more information about co-opted members on pages 92 and 93 of the Toolkit.

Pupils - pages 47, 48 and 49 of the Toolkit give ideas and examples of how pupils can help parents to get involved in the school and their learning.

Community support - the checklist on page 55 of the Toolkit may help you to think about how the wider community can support your activities.

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Help and support



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Help and support

Now that you are on the Parent Council you may feel that you've taken on a big task - but you are not on your own and there are plenty of people to help and offer support. You or other members of the Parent Council may have been members of the previous School Board or the PTA and this experience will be useful. The Parent Council is a new body, however, and new ideas will be welcome as you work out together what you want to do and how you are going to work. Your school and local authority are there to support you and there are other people and organisations who may also be able to help.

The headteacher

The headteacher will be a key contact and it will be important to work together and support each other. There are more details of the headteacher's role in the 'Getting the most from your Parent Council' leaflet.



Local



authority responsibilities

Each local authority will have a member of staff who has responsibility for parental involvement and who can discuss with you what your Parent Council needs. Your local authority must provide support to enable you to carry out your functions effectively. This might include:

- > Support with administration which may also involve the appointment of a clerk, accommodation or other services, e.g. photocopying
- > Training – particularly in relation to involvement in recruiting senior staff
- > Reasonable financial support to help you carry out your functions.

The authority will consult Parent Councils on their strategy outlining what they are doing to promote parental involvement.

One way authorities can help is by supporting Parent Councils to come together and share ideas and experiences. Meetings like this can also help to provide feedback to local authorities on their policies and services.

Who else in the authority can help?

These services may vary from authority to authority but ask about what is available in your area.

- > Community Learning and Development teams have knowledge and experience of supporting community groups and how they run. They may be able to put you in touch with training opportunities that are available in your area that will help you run your Council – e.g. Holding Effective Meetings or The Role of the Chairperson.
- > Family Learning or Home Link teams are skilled at working with adults as learners and with families. They can support you in reaching out to parents who may not find it easy to be involved in school activities and suggest activities for parents and children to have fun and learn together.
- > Libraries can be a useful resource in the community to help you publicise your 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 Coordinator in each local authority who may have ideas for Parent Council activities. They may hold events or activities that you can encourage parents and children to participate in as part of the Health Promoting Schools initiative.



Community resources

Every community contains a range of services and resources that you may be able to draw on. Most people are very pleased to be asked and can be very creative in their ideas for how they can help.

- Local businesses and shops may be interested in supporting you in a variety of ways – donating raffle prizes or sponsoring activities. They often employ local parents who can share information and encourage their employers to get involved.
- There may also be opportunities for firms/businesses to offer practical help or donations to support activities – e.g. donations of tools or plants from a garden centre to support the creation of an eco area in the school grounds.
- The links that parents have with their workplace can often be useful in developing contacts that can help children's learning by providing work experience or arranging visits.
- Local faith groups are often in touch with parents and can support you by involving a wider group of people.

You may want to consider using community venues for some of your meetings as they may be more accessible and parents may feel more comfortable there. This may be a useful approach too if you are a secondary school with a catchment area covering a number of communities or neighbourhoods.

How can the Toolkit help?



The Toolkit offers advice and activities to help with a number of areas in this leaflet.

Wider community - section 5 (pages 54 to 61) give further ideas on how the wider community can support your work.

Strategy for parental involvement - section 6 of the Toolkit gives more information and a checklist to use when considering the local authority strategy for parental involvement.

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Helping more

parents get involved



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Helping more

Parents get involved

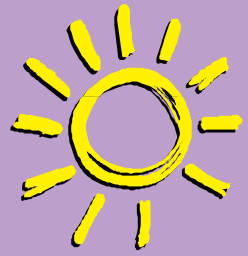
This is one of the main challenges for all Parent Councils. Helping parents to get involved in their children's learning is one of the most important ways of making a difference for children and young people. It's important to remember that involvement can take many different forms and parents need opportunities to get involved in ways that suit them best. You will only know what these are by asking them and by trying new ways.

Getting involved can be difficult

Every parent wants the best for their child but they may have difficulty in taking part in some activities run by the school or the Parent Council. This does not mean that they are not interested or don't care – it's just that there may be other pressures that get in the way or that they don't know how best to get involved. The reasons will be different for every parent so you will need to ask them to find out what would help them get involved.



communication



Communication, Communication

Better communication between schools and parents is one of the most common themes for improvement. There are already lots of ways in which schools communicate with parents but parents might feel that these could be improved even more. You might want to think about how the school communicates with parents and how the 'Making the Difference' leaflets (see 'Finding out more' leaflet in this pack) could support this.

As a Parent Council you will want to tell parents about what you are discussing and what you intend to do. You might want to consider:

- > A newsletter for parents – or if the school already has one, a specific Parent Council Update section in the school's 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 school about how you can communicate with and involve parents for whom English is not their first language or how you can reach others who may have difficulty with usual communication methods.
- > Try using new technology to reach parents; if the school has a website, include a Parent Council area featuring news and information; mobile phones and email are now the preferred method of communication for many parents; think about setting up a Parent Council website blog as a way of keeping parents informed and getting their comments back.
- > Don't forget to let parents know when and where your 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 events sponsored by the Council and be presented in a more visual way.



Building relationships

There are lots of ways to find out other parents' views of the school.

- > Your Parent Council may be made up of year representatives but if not, having a link parent for each year group is one way of sharing information and finding out the views of more parents.
- > Use every opportunity to chat to parents – at the school gate, at a parents' evening, over tea and coffee at a school event, or in your neighbourhood.
- > Social events can be a good way for parents and staff to get together and meet each other and share views and opinions as well as having a good time.
- > Remember the "3 F's" – Fun, Food and Families. Events that cater for all family members, provide refreshments and are enjoyable are most successful.
- > Choosing the right kind of event can be important – a fashion evening can be successful in secondary schools and Quiz Nights with parents and children are also popular.
- > Snowballing – where one parent agrees to bring along or introduce another – can be effective in getting people involved.
- > Make links with parents who already help in the school in other ways, e.g. running clubs, helping with the library.

How ^{can} the Toolkit help?



Involving all parents - section 2 of the Toolkit gives more information about ways of reaching out to all parents. Pages 10 and 11 outline some of the reasons why parents may find it hard to join in. It also has ideas for questionnaires that you can use on parents' nights or other school events to find out what activities parents would like to see happening and to ask them what skills, experiences or knowledge they have that could help the school.

Improving communication - page 46 of the Toolkit describes some of the ways of improving communications with parents.

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working together



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Working together as Parent council members

Making your meetings interesting and enjoyable will help to make your Parent Council a success. This leaflet includes some tips to help you make the most of your Parent Council meetings.

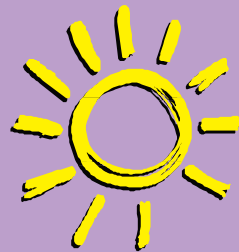
Your meetings will be most effective if everyone agrees what is expected of Parent Council members and how you are going to work together. Teamwork is essential and can be summed up as Together Everyone Achieves More.

The purpose of Parent Council meetings are to:

- > Decide what actions to take
- > Come to decisions which everyone is happy with
- > Benefit from the ideas, skills, knowledge, and opinions of all members
- > Conduct business efficiently in accordance with the constitution.



Ground rules



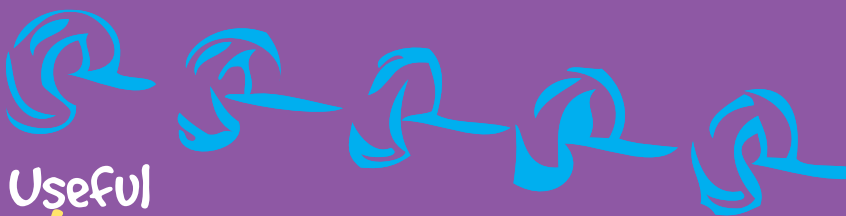
Setting ground rules that you can refer back to from time to time can help your meetings run smoothly. Your ground rules might include:

- > Ensure meetings start on time – let the Chairperson know if you are going to be late or cannot attend.
- > Stick to the agenda – if there is anything you would particularly like to discuss, speak to the Secretary or Clerk to ask for an item on the agenda.
- > Support the group and work as a team – everyone's contribution is important.
- > Listen to each other and respect each others, point of view.
- > Discourage domination by one or a few members and encourage quieter members to take part.
- > Aim towards constructive discussion and decisions – try not to get 'personal'. If you disagree with someone make clear it is their point of view you disagree with rather than them as an individual.

The agenda

To get the most out of your meetings it helps to have some structure and focus to your discussions. This makes sure that everything can be discussed and dealt with. Any member should be able to put forward suggestions for agenda items to the Chairperson or Secretary for discussion at a meeting. However, it's important to remember that the Parent Council cannot discuss matters relating to individual parents, children or staff members for reasons of confidentiality.

Also, Parent Council meetings are generally open meetings and parents from the wider Parent Forum may attend. As a Parent Council you may want to decide how others attending meetings can participate in discussions.



Useful tips

- > Set dates for meetings well in advance to avoid clashing with other events or groups/committees.
 - > Make sure that agendas are not too long. Three or four main items, apart from the standard items are plenty.
 - > Two hours is long enough for any meeting – make time for a tea break during your meeting.
 - > Standard items that will be on every agenda, e.g. minutes and matters arising; sub-group, Secretary and Treasurer reports, should be dealt with quickly to ensure that there is enough time to talk about the main topics.
 - > Check that actions agreed at the previous meeting have been carried out.
 - > Any other business - it is a good idea for the Chairperson to ask for items of any other business at the start of the meeting so that they can be programmed into the meeting.
 - > Ask your headteacher of any important dates in the education calendar when you know you will have items to discuss – e.g. when school development plans have to be produced.
- 

What happens if things go wrong?

- > No matter how well your Parent Council is running there may be occasions when differences of opinion occur. These may be between individual members of the Parent Council or between the Parent Council and the headteacher. In either case it will be important to listen to the different views being expressed and to try to find areas of agreement. Focus on the issue and trying to find a way forward.
- > If there is disagreement about what the Parent Council should be doing, you could put the issue to the wider Parent Forum to gain their views.
- > Sometimes the Parent Council and the headteacher may have different opinions on an issue. It is important that discussion focuses on reaching agreement in the interests of the well being of all children and the school, for whom the headteacher is ultimately responsible.

If you cannot reach agreement with the headteacher you can make your case to the education authority who may ask one of their staff to help resolve the issue. Exceptionally, if after involving the education authority you still have concerns, it may be possible to refer the issue to HMIE (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education).

How can the Toolkit help?



The Toolkit offers advice and activities to help with a number of areas in this leaflet.

Resolving disagreements – page 52 of the Toolkit provides some ideas for resolving disagreements or misunderstandings.

Complaints - pages 74 - 76 of the Toolkit cover complaints procedures. Note: the education authority is under a duty to have a complaints procedure in place and to consult Parent Councils on the procedure.

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Part 7 in a series of 9 leaflets.

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Roles of office bearers



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Roles of office bearers

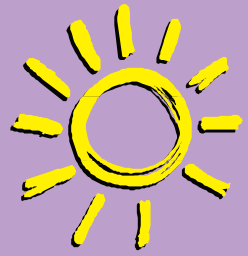
Your Parent Council may choose to have office bearers to help to organise how you work and to carry out some of the tasks that need to be done in order to run smoothly. Some parent groups have joint office bearers who work together and share out some of the tasks. Here are some of the common roles in groups and some of their possible tasks.

The Chairperson

The Parent Council should always be chaired by a member of the Parent Forum. The success of a meeting can depend upon how it is chaired but remember, the Chairperson is the person who makes sure things get done; not the person who does everything.



The Chairperson



There are two basic jobs the Chairperson should do:

- a) Guide the Parent Council to achieve its aims
- b) Chair the meetings of the Parent Council

Some of the duties of the Chairperson are as follows:

- > Liaise with the Secretary/Clerk on the agenda and meeting arrangements.
- > Welcome members and introduce guests.
- > Ensure fair discussion and that everyone gets a chance to have their say.
- > Stop anyone taking over or dominating discussions.
- > Get through the agenda on time.
- > Sum up issues, points and decisions.
- > Ensure decisions are carried out.
- > Work with the Treasurer to ensure that proper financial accounts are prepared for meetings, including the Annual General Meeting.

The Secretary

The Secretary plays an important role in supporting communication between Parent Council members themselves and between the Parent Forum and the Parent Council. It is important that the Parent Council agrees how members of the Parent Forum can get in touch with the Secretary and that these arrangements are well publicised so that all parents know how to make contact.

Some of the duties of the Secretary are to:

- > Make arrangements for meetings and prepare an agenda in consultation with the Chairperson.
- > Send a notice of the meeting, venue and agenda to all Parent Council members so that they will receive them in good time for the meeting. Agendas should be sent out for all meetings even if they are held at the same time and place each month.
- > Keep a record of everyone attending the meeting and any apologies for absence.
- > Let Parent Council members know about all correspondence received and report any action taken since last meeting.
- > Take a minute of meetings, recording decisions and actions to be taken and by whom. This can be a task that is shared amongst members of the Parent Council to allow the Secretary to participate in discussions.
- > Provide minutes for all Parent Council members prior to or at meetings.

The Clerk

Your Parent Council may have a Clerk appointed who will undertake all or some of the tasks of the Secretary. If the Clerk is not a member of the Parent Council they can be paid either by the Parent Council, or by the local authority. Your local authority can help in the appointment of a Clerk if this is what you decide.

The Treasurer

Every Parent Council that intends to raise money should make sure a Treasurer is appointed to handle the money coming in and going out of the group. The Treasurer is responsible for the proper handling of the finances of the Parent Council, but not the actual raising of money.

The tasks of the Treasurer include:

- Having a clear and accurate book-keeping system that records any money received and how the money is spent.
- Maintaining the bank account. It is good financial practice to require two out of three of the Officers' signatures on cheques to allow any money to be withdrawn or spent.
- Producing a report for each meeting stating money paid into, or out of, the account since the last meeting.
- Advise on the amount of money available for the group's work and warn of excess expenditure.

Prior to the Parent Council Annual General Meeting (AGM) the Treasurer should arrange for the year's accounts to be independently checked (audited) and agreed with the Chair. The Treasurer should present the audited financial statement at the AGM and answer any questions on the accounts.

Sub groups

It may be useful to have some sub-groups of the Parent Council to carry out some specific tasks. If you are setting up sub-groups these should be given a clear remit with someone taking responsibility for organising the group and reporting back to the Parent Council.

Some of the tasks you may consider allocating to sub-groups might include:

- > Organising fundraising
- > Planning social events for parents, children and staff
- > Communicating with parents which might include a newsletter
- > Working with staff on new approaches to learning and teaching and how parents can be involved
- > Links with the community.

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Finding out more



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Finding out more

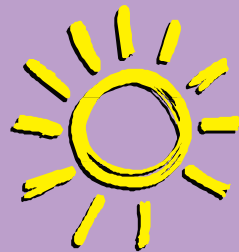
Your Parent Council is supported by law under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. The Scottish Executive has produced two key documents with information and advice about the Act.

- > The **Guidance** explains the Act and includes a copy of it. It describes **what** local authorities and schools need to do to meet the requirements of the Act. It also describes the functions of a Parent Council.
- > The **Toolkit** has lots of practical ideas of **how** you can make the Act work. It has examples of what is already happening in schools, checklists and activities for schools and parents to work on together.

Both documents can be found on the Parentzone website at www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk. This website provides information for parents on all aspects of Scottish education. It can be a good starting point for any questions you may get from parents.



How this pack Can help you



Your headteacher has a copy of the Guidance and a copy of the Toolkit has been sent to your Parent Council. All of the checklists and activities in the Toolkit can be downloaded from Parentzone in 'Word' format which means that you can alter and adapt them or add your own school logo to suit your own needs.

Working With parents

Your Parent Council may wish to look at the Scottish Executive series of leaflets called '**Making the Difference**'. There are twelve leaflets in all covering a range of issues of interest to parents such as Homework, Parents Evenings, Sharing Information, Out of School Learning, Getting involved in your child's school, etc. Your Parent Council may wish to discuss with the school how these can be used with parents. The leaflets can also be adapted to support some of the activities that you may be planning.

The leaflets can be ordered via the Parentzone website and you can get them in various community languages. Some schools send out both the English and community language version.

Parents as partners

Your Parent Council has been sent an 'Involving Parents' CD Rom (with the Toolkit). This includes videos of parents and school staff describing what works in their schools and many examples of letters, newsletters, leaflets and other resources from a range of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. You may wish to discuss with your headteacher whether any of the ideas could be adapted for your school.

The Learning and Teaching Scotland website gives lots of ideas and suggestions for teachers and schools on how they can work in partnership with parents to help children achieve. See www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentsaspartnersinlearning/index.asp

Many local authorities also use their own websites to provide local information for parents and Parent Councils. Ask your local authority link person about this.

There is a wide variety of websites and organisations which can provide information and advice useful to your Parent Council.

For ways of how to support children's learning:

- > Parentscentre www.parentscentre.gov.uk

(How to help with children's learning, including advice on choosing a school and finding childcare)

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

(Help with school work, home/school life and games and worksheets)



Parents as partners

For general advice and information and other services to Parent Councils:

- > Scottish Parent Council Association - formerly Scottish School Board Association (SSBA) Tel: 01387 260428
www.scottishparents.com
- > Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC) Tel: 0131 226 4378
www.sptc.info

Parent Councils are not expected to discuss individual cases, but may like to be aware of organisations that offer support to parents. Parentzone contains links to a wide range of such organisations including:

- > Parent Network Scotland Tel: 0131 555 6780
www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk
(Delivers courses and informal, practical and participative workshops in parenting skills to parents and professionals)
- > Enquire Helpline: 0845 123 2303 Textphone: 0131 222 2439
Email: info@enquire.org.uk or access www.enquire.org.uk
(Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning)

The Parentzone website contains information, advice and resources to help parents become more involved in their child's education and support their learning. Visit www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk



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