

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 25 JUNE 2007

REPORT ON: THE REPEAL OF SCHOOL BOARDS LEGISLATION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF PARENT FORUMS/COUNCILS FROM AUGUST 1 2007

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 359-2007

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To obtain Committee approval of revised procedures for the introduction of Parent Forums/Councils.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

2.2 approve the proposals included in this report for the introduction of Parent Forums/Councils.

2.3 note the key differences between School Boards and the new Parent Forums/Councils (appendix 1)

2.4 approve the draft strategy for implementation of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act)

2.5 note the financial implications

2.6 accept the proposal for a fixed term contract post of Parental Involvement Officer post from August 2007 - June 2008

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 This report recommends establishing Parent Forums/Councils in all Primary, and Secondary Schools and Kingspark School. The total budget required in financial year 2007/08 is £ 22,110.00. This can be contained within the existing provision for School Boards in the Education Revenue Budget. The cost of the fixed term post of Parental Involvement Officer will be met from specific additional grant funding from the Scottish Executive. The budget required in future years will decrease with the mergers and opening of new schools within the PPP Project.

Parent Forum/Council

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|
| 40 Primary Schools | (£410.00 * 40) | £16,400.00 |
| 1 Special School | (£410.00 *1) | £ 410.00 |
| 10 Secondary School | (£530.00*10) | £ 5,300.00 |

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| Total Budget | | <u>£22,110.00</u> |
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Parental Involvement Officer

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 fixed term post | (£21861-£24201 * 1) | <u>£23,870.00</u> |
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4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** These proposals will encourage all parents/carers to be more involved in their child(rens) education.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Increasing the involvement of parents in the life of schools allows all the opportunity to make their views known and will make schools more representative of the views of their community.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1** The Parental Involvement Act modernises and strengthens the framework for supporting parental involvement in school education. It requires Scottish Ministers and education authorities to promote the involvement of parents in children's education at publicly funded schools. It aims to help parents to be:
- involved with their child's education and learning
 - welcomed as an active participant in the life of the school , and
 - encouraged to express their views on school education generally.

- 6.2** The Act requires Dundee City Council Education Department prepare a strategy document setting out their policies for parental involvement. The strategy must cover the authority's duties to:
- involve parents in their own child's education, and that provided by the 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
 - establish a complaints procedure for their duties under the Act

- 6.3** The Parental Involvement Act takes effect on 1st August and School Boards will cease to exist, being replaced by Parent Forums/Councils in all schools. To raise awareness of this an Implementation Group made up of parents and staff has been formed to consult and carry forward a strategy for implementation in Dundee schools. A draft strategy has been devised (appendix 2) and is presently out for consultation with the Implementation group.

- 6.4** All parents who have a child attending a public school are automatically a member of the Parent Forum for that school. Membership of the forum allows parents to have a say in the local arrangements to enable their collective view to be heard on relevant matters. Should they decide to do so, the Parent Forum can establish a Parent Council for their school to represent their views.

- 6.5** The Education Department have and will continue to ensure that all parents with children attending, or about to start, at their schools are aware of what membership of the Parent Forum means. This will be done via meetings, newsletters and general support to schools/Parent Councils.

- 6.6** Dundee City Council is committed to increasing parental involvement in education. To facilitate the introduction of the new parental involvement Act the following measures have been taken:

- Regular newsletters to all parents
- A parental involvement conference held in February 2007 with 170 in attendance
- Regular meetings of the Implementation group
- All parents received copies of a Making the Difference leaflet from the Scottish Executive entitled " A new law to support parents"
- Support with the formation of Parent Councils through presentations to parent bodies and the supply of materials to encourage wider parent/carer involvement
- Presentations to head teachers
- Attendance of parents and staff at national conferences and events

6.7 Section 14 of the Act provides for the involvement of the new Parent Councils in the appointment of headteachers and depute headteachers. This is covered in a separate report.

6.8 Education Authorities are required to establish a procedure to consider complaints or other representations in respect of a failure by them to exercise any of their functions under the Act. Dundee City Council Education Department already has such a procedure in place.

6.9 In the particular context of this Act, Dundee Education Department will take into account factors that may discourage or inhibit parents' involvement in their children's education or contact with the school. This will include ensuring that home/school communication arrangements are appropriate for all parents including mobile families, absent parents and those whose language is not English and those who have difficulties with written communication. Other factors such as being alert to situations where families experience practical difficulties in terms of challenging family circumstances, domestic or care arrangements which may make it difficult for parents to come into the school will also be taken into account.

6.10 To support this process the temporary post of Parental Involvement Officer will be created. This fixed term post is graded at AP4, £21861 - £24201 and the total cost for the fixed term period including employees cost is £ 23,870. The post will run from August 2007-June 2008 to fully support the transition process from School Boards to Parent Forums/Councils.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services).

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Director of Education

Date 18th June 2007

AW/LW



School Boards and Parent Councils : A Comparison

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 is intended to increase the level of parental involvement and engagement in children's education. School Boards will cease to exist on 31 July 2007. Parent Forums and Parent Councils will come into effect from August 2007.

This leaflet outlines the key differences between the School Board and the new Parent Forum and Parent Council.

| <i>Size, composition and appointment</i> | | |
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| <u>School Boards</u> | | <u>Parent Councils</u> |
| Board size and make-up is a set ratio of parents, teacher and co-opted members. Four 'bands' are based on school roll, eg roll of <500 means 4 parents, 1 teacher and 2 co-opted members; > 1500 means 7, 3 & 3 respectively. Parents always have a majority of 1 on the Board | NEW | The Parent Forum, which is made up of all parents, carers and/or guardians of pupils at the school (including parents of nursery class), will decide on the type of Parent Council parents think will suit the school. The School's parent body (the new Parent Forum) will decide the size and composition of their Parent Council. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 is designed to allow parents to decide on Parent Councils that reflect local circumstances |
| Formal elections for School Boards are held every other autumn | NEW | The method of appointing (and co-opting) Parent Council members will be decided by the parents. Generally, members of the Parent Council must be parents of children who attend the school and the chairperson must have a child in the school. However, the Parent Council can decide to co-opt other members from teachers, support staff, pupils and the community who will have knowledge and skills to help them. In denominational schools, the Parent Council must invite the relevant church or denominational body to nominate a representative to be a co-opted member. Once established, the Parent Council must inform the headteacher of the school, members of the Parent Forum, pupils and other parties as they consider appropriate that it has been established. The Parent Council must also inform them of who the members are and how they can be contacted. It must also provide a copy of its constitution to the headteacher and inform members of the Parent Forum and other parties as they consider appropriate of what its functions will be. |
| School Boards have no individual constitutions – the details are set out in statute. | NEW | The Parent Forum decides on the type of Parent Council and constitution that is right for the school. The main function of a constitution is to describe the Parent Council, what its objectives are and how it will carry these out. 'Model constitutions' will be offered for parents' consideration, but not imposed on them. Parents will be able to make further amendments to the constitution at a later stage. Changes to the constitution can be made at anytime after obtaining consent from members of the Parent Forum |

| Functions | | |
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| <u>School Boards</u> | | <u>Parent Councils</u> |
| Functions to be exercised with a view to raising standards and quality of school's education | EXPANDED | <p>Parents have a key supportive role to play in assisting the headteacher and school staff in their aims to raise standards of education and secure improvements in the quality of education provided by the school.</p> <p>The aim is to 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 – the wider definition of education in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000.</p> |
| Promote contact between schools, parents and community | EXPANDED | <p>The role of the Parent Council falls broadly within four areas and will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>The Council can also make contact with parents of prospective pupils and others (perhaps nurseries, colleges, etc).</p> |
| Report at least annually to the parent body on Board activity | CONTINUED | |
| Ascertain views of parents on matters which are Board responsibilities | EXPANDED | <p>Ascertain views of parents on any matter of interest or concern.</p> <p>The Council should have in place arrangements for ascertaining the views of the parent body (the new Parent Forum) as regards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the standards of education in the school • the quality of education which the school provides • the exercise by the Parent Council of its functions • such other matters as appear to the Parent Council to be of interest or concern to the Parent Forum |
| Powers | | |
| <u>School Boards</u> | | <u>Parent Councils</u> |
| Request and receive advice, information and reports from education authority or Head Teacher. | CONTINUED | |
| Make representations to authority or Head Teacher on arrangements for parent-teacher consultation and on information, statements and reports requested and provided as above. | EXPANDED | <p>Representation can be made on any matter of interest or concern to parents or the Parent Council.</p> <p>As a member of the Parent Forum you can expect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| | NEW | In future, if representations made to an authority or Head Teacher remain unresolved, a Parent Council may then make them to HMIE. |

| <i>Powers (continued)</i> | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Raise funds, receive gifts and expend sums at their discretion for the benefit of the school, taking account of the Head Teacher's views. | EXPANDED | In future, a Parent Council may : a) raise funds by any means other than by borrowing b) receive gifts; and may expend any sums so received entirely at the Parent Council's discretion. |
| Involvement in appointment processes for Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers (specifically at shortleet and final interview stages) | EXPANDED | The Bill states the principle of Parent Council involvement in new appointment processes. It is intended the parent representatives will be involved in agreeing the job specification and advertising strategy, and participating in the leeting and interview processes. |
| Appointment of clerk who, if not a Board member, may be paid. | CONTINUED | |
| Approval of Head Teacher spend on books and teaching materials, subject to authority guidance and policy. | DISCONTINUED | These 3 aspects of 'management' are being discontinued. |
| Fix occasional holidays after consulting the authority | DISCONTINUED | |
| Control the use of school premises outside school hours, subject to authority direction. | DISCONTINUED | |
| <i>Education authority and/or Head Teacher responsibilities</i> | | |
| <u>School Boards</u> | | <u>Parent Councils</u> |
| Authorities and Head Teachers to give information and advice, on request | CONTINUED | |
| Take account of representations received and respond to them | CONTINUED | |
| Provide financial support including administration, training expenses and other outgoings | CONTINUED | |
| Provision of financial information, budget and outturn | CONTINUED | On request rather than automatic, i.e. depending on the Parent Council's priorities. |
| Head Teacher has a right to attend School Board meetings | EXPANDED | The Head Teacher has both a duty and a right to attend. The Head Teacher should be present at Parent Council meetings, or be represented by another member of staff, unless both the Head Teacher and the Parent Council agree it isn't necessary. |
| Head Teacher provides Board with an annual report on pupil attainment | EXPANDED | The annual report will provide an evaluation of the performance of the school and state what the Head Teacher's objectives and ambitions for the school are. A summary copy will go to all parents. ? |
| Head Teacher informs the Board of policy changes in relation to the curriculum, pupil assessment, discipline, rules and uniform | EXPANDED | Head Teacher to have regard to, and respond to, representations from Parent Council for information on or involvement in policy changes, on these or any other matters. |

DRAFT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

The Parental Involvement Act aims to strengthen parental/carer involvement in education by supporting parents' direct involvement in their children's education. It aims to do this by introducing a more flexible system of parental representation in schools.

The Act includes:-

- New statutory duties on Scottish ministers and Education Authorities to promote the involvement of parents in their child's education.
- A new duty on Education Authorities to prepare Strategies for Parental Involvement which will form part of their Annual Statement of Improvement Objectives and be reflected in School Development Plans.
- A new two-tier approach to parental involvement and representation in schools whereby a "Parent Forum" which comprised all the parents of children attending a school can decide to establish a "Parent Council" to represent them.
- A new requirement that, in a denominational school, the Parent Council will have a co-opted member nominated by the church or denominational body.
- A new right and duty on Head Teachers to attend Parent Council meetings.
- A new provision for a Parent Council to raise concerns with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE).
- Specific provision for a Parent Council to appoint a paid Clerk.
- A new requirement on Head Teachers to provide an annual report to the Parent Council evaluating the school's performance and setting out the ambitions for the school and make available a summary to all parents as members of the school's Parent Forum.
- A new provision for a combined Parent Council to represent parents in more than one school where that is the preference of parents in each of the schools.
- Provision to allow Education Authorities to develop new procedures for the appointment of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers which involve Parent Councils.
- A new duty on Education Authorities to establish and publicise complaints procedures relating to how they carry out their functions as set out in the Act.

As a direct response to this Act, Dundee City Council has developed a draft Parental Involvement Strategy in partnership with parents to build upon current practice and ensure the Act's aims are achieved in the future.

There are three main ways in which parents get involved in supporting their children's learning and education:-

- Learning at Home
- Home/School partnerships
- Parental representation

and it is the duty of the authority and individual schools to encourage and support all parents to be more actively involved in their children's education. This will be monitored by the Education Department through the school review process and other mechanisms such as surveys, HMIE reports & the Parental Implementation Group.

The Parental Involvement Strategy will ensure Dundee City Council Education Department fulfils its duty to:-

- Establish what will be delivered as a reference for parents.
- Support implementation of the Act.
- Promote the involvement of parents in the education provided by the school to their child and to pupils generally at their child's school, specifically in the 3 key areas outlined.
- Give advice and information to parents.
- Guide practice in schools as to how parents can be involved in certain policy decisions, the SDP and other areas of interest.
- Promote the establishment of Parent Councils.
- Give advice and information to Parent Councils and support their operation.
- Take account of the needs of looked after children.
- Consider how the strategy will provide equal opportunities
- Continue to offer a complaints procedure in respect of the authority's functions under the Act.

The Education Department is consulting with a wide range of parents, carers and staff to gain a better understanding of how all these groups are involved in the education of their children now and how more parents/carers can be involved in the future. Through the establishment of Parent Councils it is hoped more parents and carers will become actively involved in their child's education.

To take the strategy forward and develop it into a meaningful and effective document, the Education Department has formed a Parental Involvement Implementation Group comprising of parents from a number of schools, Head Teachers, Education Managers and the Head of Primary Education. The parents on this group volunteered and come from a variety of parental bodies - School Board, PTA, Friends of and some parents who have no previous experience of membership of a parent body. This brings a wide and diverse range of experience to the group.

This group have produced a timeline which will be followed during the course of 2006 -07. The timeline outlines important action points throughout the period September 2006 - December 2007 so that the success of the roll out of the Act can be measured. The Implementation Group will continue to be the voice of parents within Dundee City and new members are constantly sought.

Action to date

The following has already taken place:

- All parents in the city invited to join the Implementation Group. Over 30 have done so and this group meet on a regular basis. A sub group has met with the Department's Public Relations Officer with a view to having a two page article in the local press re the new Act and how parents can be fully involved in Parent Forums/Councils.
- Regular newsletters go out to all parents in Dundee schools. All parents have also received the Making the Difference leaflet " A New Law to Support Parents."
- The full range of Making the Difference leaflets are available in all schools for parents to request.
- A parental conference with Judith Gillespie from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council as the presenter was organised in the Hilton Hotel on 28 February 2007. 170 parents attended as well as a number of Head Teachers.
- Groups of Head Teachers have attended conferences organised by Learning & Teaching Scotland (LTS) on parental involvement and the new Act.

- The Primary Education Manager has attended a number of seminars organised by LTS.
- All Head Teachers had a briefing from LTS staff on the Act.
- All schools/School Boards and PTA's have received the Toolkit and the Primary Education Manager has given a presentation to 25 schools with others still to be done.
- The Primary Education Manager gives support and advice to parents and schools as requested.
- Draft constitutions are checked by the legal department.
- Consultation with teacher unions is currently taking place.

Future developments

Education Department

A new post of Parental Involvement Officer will be created with the successful candidate taking up a 12 month secondment/fixed term contract in August 2007. This officer will continue to support Parent Forum/Councils and parents/schools generally over the course of the school session.

The key function for the Parental Involvement Officer will be to ensure there are opportunities for all parents who wish to be can be involved under the 3 headings of :-

- Learning at home.
- Home/School partnerships.
- Parental representation.

The remit will include opportunities:-

- to effectively promote parental involvement in Dundee.
- to continue to support the Council's Implementation Group.
- to establish a Parental Network to provide information and support to parent Forums/Councils as they take the Act forward.
- to develop an information service for parents including the publication of key leaflets giving information.
- to develop a Parental Involvement portal on the Council's website.
- to devise and offer training and development opportunities to parents and appropriate staff.
- to establish a multi cultural parent forum.
- to ensuring that those deemed to be parents of looked after pupils play an active part in the home/school partnership. Contact with foster parents, social work departments and other agencies will be crucial in ensuring appropriate opportunities are offered to all seen as having parental responsibility.
- to develop learning groups in nurseries to support nursery/primary and primary/secondary transition.
- to gather best practice from schools and disseminate to all establishments.
- to be a key contact for all queries relating to parental involvement.
- to represent the Authority at parental conferences/seminars.
- to manage the financial aspects of the new Act at Authority level.
- to work with Parent Forums/Councils in devising/amending appropriate constitutions.
- to organise a "Best Practise Roadshow" for the city.
- to facilitate and give presentations at parent meetings as required.

The Education Department has a complaints officer and appropriate procedures currently in place. All parents have previously been made aware of this but it is intended to re launch information about this service in August 2007 by way of an information leaflet for every parent.

Individual schools

All schools will look in detail at the barriers that prevent parents who find it difficult to support their children's education due to family/other circumstances. This could include:

- providing creche facilities at meetings.
- alternating the day/time/venue of meetings.
- offering signers/braille material at meetings.
- considering the needs of parents who have little/no English.
- taking account of minority groups in the community.
- supporting parent representatives identify training/other needs to allow them to carry out their functions effectively.
- helping publicise parent events.

Parental involvement will feature in every school's School Development Plan and will be evaluated through the school review process, HMIE inspections and school self evaluation. Schools will be proactive in supporting parental involvement and the transition from School Boards to parent Forums/Councils.

Parents

Parents are seen as the main educators of children and as such it is vital they are fully consulted and involved in their child's education at all stages.

Within many Dundee schools have developed excellent partnerships between parents and a wide range of staff. The Education Department is committed to offering whatever assistance it can to continue and expand these partnerships.

Many parents are keen to offer assistance to their children's school, and many schools have found that assistance to be invaluable. Some of the activities include

- fund raising events
- supporting curricular areas
- sharing expertise/giving talks
- helping at sports days/events
- joining educational excursions
- supporting school websites
- preparing resources
- musical events
- art & craft
- working to enhance school grounds
- encouraging other parents to be involved in the life of the school
- school productions/shows
- supporting after school clubs

Parent volunteers can help to give pupils a visible indication of parents and staff working together in partnership to enrich the learning experiences on offer. For parent volunteers themselves, the benefits can include a greater understanding of the life of the school, the sharing of skills and a broader understanding of children's learning.

The timeline lays out future plans until December 2007.

Dundee City Council Education Department Parental Involvement Act - Implementation Timescale

