

Making the difference — improving parents' involvement in schools

a consultation on a draft bill



CHOICE



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What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet is intended for parents and carers of all children and young people in Scotland's schools. It tells you about some proposed changes that will help you to be more involved in your child's education and in schools. It also tells you how you can let us know what **you** think of the changes.

Children do better when their parents are involved in their education and so we want to give you better opportunities and more help in getting involved. Our focus is on two main areas:

- helping you get involved in your child's learning
- encouraging more of you to get involved in your child's school.

We are already producing materials to help parents support their children's learning and have made many improvements to the Parentzone website (www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk). We also want to make sure that the ways you are involved in schools, and your views are represented, work as well as possible for all of you.

We have listened to parents' views across Scotland. This has led to our set of proposals which will strengthen your rights as parents and improve parental representation in schools.

Current arrangements for parental representation are set out in an Act of Parliament – the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988. To make changes we would need to introduce a Bill in the Scottish Parliament, which, if passed by Parliament, would become law. We have drafted a Bill called the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill and now want to hear what you think about the proposals it contains. This is a real opportunity for you to make your views known. The back page of this leaflet tells you the different ways you can tell us what you think.



What is the new Parental Involvement Bill aiming to do?

The Bill will:

- › replace School Boards with more flexible and inclusive bodies to represent parents' views – new 'parent forums'
- › ensure schools and education authorities respond to requests from parents for advice and information about their children's education
- › ensure education authorities (local councils) strengthen and support parents' involvement in their children's learning and in schools by:
 - › promoting and supporting the new parent forums
 - › drawing up strategies for parental involvement in education and schools
 - › establishing a complaints procedure about the way they carry out their responsibilities under the Bill
- › allow education authorities to modernise their appointments systems for headteachers and deputy headteachers while ensuring parents continue to be involved in the process.





How would we achieve this?

1. School Boards would be replaced by new bodies which would be shaped and appointed by the parents' body in each school to represent parents' views. In the draft Bill these are called 'parent forums'.

- School Boards represent parents' views in many schools. However, recent consultation with parents and others suggests that more flexible systems of representation could work better for more schools and more parents.
- Each school is unique. We believe that the parents in each school should themselves decide on the arrangements they want for the parent forums.
- The parents at each school would decide how to appoint the members. There would be no more compulsory elections.
- Each parent forum would receive support from the education authority who could also assist with setting up the forums.

2. Education authorities would promote parental involvement in education and set out how they will do this.

- Because parental involvement is so important to children's education and achievement, we are proposing that education authorities should have a new legal obligation to promote it.

- The new duty will be to promote parents' involvement in their children's widest learning experiences, their development and their ability to achieve their full potential. These are areas where parents can and do make a real difference to children's chances of success.
- Each education authority would consult parents before preparing a 'Strategy for Parental Involvement'. Local schools would also plan to improve parental involvement.

3. Education authorities would have a 'duty' to respond to requests from parents for advice and information about their own children's education.

We are proposing that parents will have a legal right to ask for and receive advice and information about their children's education from the headteachers or teachers employed by the education authority.

4. Education authorities would have to ensure that parents are closely involved in the appointments of headteachers and deputy headteachers within any more up-to-date procedures they may wish to introduce.

We are aware that involvement in appointing senior staff in schools is very important to parents. The Scottish Executive is committed to ensuring that education authorities continue this.



What would the new Parental Involvement Bill mean for you?

In summary:

You as a parent would have the right to:

- be directly involved in setting up a parent forum in your child's school in a form which reflects your wishes and preferences
- request and get advice and information from the local education authority on any matter relating to your child's school education
- complain to an education authority about how it carries out any of its duties in the new Bill.

Parents collectively (as the parent forum) would have the right to:

- be consulted on the education authority's Strategy for Parental Involvement
- be supported by their education authority
- have their voice and views listened to and responded to by the headteacher and education authority
- request and get information from the headteacher or education authority
- be consulted about schools' arrangements for consultation between parents and teachers
- continue to be involved with new appointments processes for headteachers and deputy headteachers.

Let us have your views!

You have the opportunity to be involved in this consultation! We want your views on our proposed changes. You can send us your views in two different ways before the closing date of **Tuesday 7 June 2005**.

- You can get a copy of the full consultation paper and let us have your views in writing. It sets out the proposals in more detail, includes a copy of the draft Bill and suggests some questions we are particularly interested in. You can get a copy from the Scottish Executive (**0131 244 4485**) or from the Parentzone website **www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk**. Parentzone also has a form for you to respond online.

You can email your response to

parentalinvolvementbill@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

or post it to:

**Parental Involvement Bill Consultation
Scottish Executive Education Department
Schools Division
Area 2-B North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ**

- You can also join us at a consultation event. We will be holding events in different parts of Scotland in April. If you would like to attend please get in touch with the Scottish Civic Forum on **0131 557 6767**.



