

Piaskowski K (Karen)

From: Mailer-Daemon@scotland.gov.uk
Sent: 24 March 2005 09:50
To: Parental Involvement Bill
Subject: 030

Response from the Parentzone - Parental Involvement questionnaire

Name: Mark Irvine

Responding as: An individual

Individual: Yes

Confidentially: Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address Behalf of groups: Yes

Sharing responses / future engagement: Yes

Question 1: Yes - but the new duty on education authorities should sit within a broad national framework or strategy from the Scottish Executive, so that parents have a clear idea of what they can expect from their school and local council.

Question 2: Yes

Question 3: Yes, but very few parents are involved in school development plans at the moment - so part of the solution must be to make these plans more relevant and interesting to parents and ensure that more parents are involved in future - by using new ways of working such as small focus groups, for example.

Question 4: Yes, there should be a move away from formal elections (which puts many parents off) and an emphasis on engaging with the wider parent body - not through meetings but with carefully targeted issues and events. Question 5: Yes - although there should be a good practice framework - a template for people to

organise around - and membership should not just be restricted to parents - schools are or should be community facilities these days - and the wider community should also have a voice.

Question 6: Yes - with the proviso that support should be as independent as possible of the school and education authority.

Question 7: Yes - where there is clear evidence that wider bodies are supported by parents - and so long as there is an ability for parents to create a more local focus if views and circumstances change over time.

Question 8: Yes, but in a facilitating role but the driving force should be the parents, school and headteacher. Question 9: Yes, but there should be a model constitution for people to adapt for their own use locally.

Question 10: No - membership should not be restricted to parents - co-opted members have a lot to offer - though parents should be in a majority. Question 11: The needs of looked after children should be addressed separately and incorporated within the school development plan - by actively seeking the views of carers and statutory agencies (e.g. social work, educational psychologists etc)

Question 12: Yes

Question 13: Yes

Question 14: Yes - there should be no blanket restrictions on what the Parent Body can consider - the wider its remit the better - parents have a clear role in addressing behaviour issues, school attainment and performance, the use of school resources, school inspections, communications etc

Question 15: Yes

Question 16: Yes

Question 17: Yes

Question 18: Yes

Question 19: Yes

Question 20: In principle, yes, but it depends upon how these more modern, flexible processes and procedures will operate in practice.

Question 21:

Question 22: Yes

Making a Difference - Improving Parents' Involvement with Schools: a Scottish Executive Consultation Paper

Title of Parent Body

- Titles are important
- Convey an image and sense of purpose
- Parent Forum – sounds vague and lacks focus
- Parent Council or Committee – is a better, stronger term
- Parents should be key partners in good governance of schools

Membership

- Two categories of membership
- Parent members and co-opted members
- Parents members – broadly representative - by year group, area etc.
- Co-opted members drawn from various sources
- Local people with suitable experience and expertise
- Consider experience of housing associations in Scotland
- Community schools require a wider participation
- Local people (not just parents) need a strong voice

Attendance

- Parent Council/Committee – a partnership body working by consensus
- Within an agreed framework - model constitution and rules
- Partnership between school, parents and the local community
- All parents entitled to attend meetings
- Core group agreed/appointed by annual meeting
- Mix of parents and co-opted members
- Head Teacher in attendance - additional staff as appropriate
- Others by invitation and agreement

Start-up Responsibility

- Key relationship is the one between the school and parent body
- Responsibility should rest with Head Teacher and Parent Council
- Facilitating/supporting role for local education authority
- Provision of expertise and support in various areas
- Economies of scale – e.g. providing a model constitution
- Admin back up, formal training and capacity building

Role of the Parent Council

- Flexibility is key – focus on different ways of working with parents
- Shift emphasis away from formal elections
- Operate at various levels and in different ways – not just through meetings
- Engage with parents on their own terms – make access easy
- Build network of informed and increasingly active parents

- Consider new and better ways of working – wider forums
- Address the right issues - behaviour, attainment, facilities and resources
- Raise standards and quality of information provided to parents
- Ask parents what they want – focus on different stages in school life
- Parent Body – should be an integral part of school development plan
- Improve year on year – develop and share good practice

Resources

- Parent Councils need support in key areas
- Start up – facilitation skills etc – taking a wider view
- Local education authority has a important role
- But support and resources should be as independent as possible

National Focus

- Parent Councils need a champion – to balance other education interests
- A strong, strategic voice at Scottish level – speaking up for the grass roots
- In a regular dialogue with ministers and civil servants
- Create a new Scottish Parent Body – to replace SPTC and SSBA
- Identify and help promote good practice
- Build links and networks – showcase local and national events
- New body should have seat on General Teaching Council for Scotland

Recruitment and Selection

- Parents have a legitimate role in recruitment and selection
- Particularly in senior appointments
- So long as they are properly trained
- Insist on appropriate training required for everyone involved
- Good equal opportunities practice should underpin the process

Information Technology

- Many schools are the size of medium sized businesses
- Communications are a fundamental issue
- Importance of new technology and new ways of working
- Opportunities provided by e-mail and the Internet
- Interactive web site – information exchange and networking
- Individual contact points – voice mail and e-mail for teachers
- Reduce paperwork and unnecessary bureaucracy

Mark Irvine - March 2005