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From: Mailer-Daemon@scotland.gov.uk [mailto:Mailer-Daemon@scotland.gov.uk]

Sent: 27 April 2005 20:16

To: Parental Involvement Bill

Subject: Parentzone Making the Difference Questionnaire

Response from the Parentzone - Parental Involvement questionnaire

Name: Donald Jenks

Responding as: An individual

Individual: Yes

Confidentiality: Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

Behalf of groups:

Sharing responses / future engagement: Yes

Question 1: Yes

Question 2: Yes

Question 3: Yes, provided the strategies are widely circulated to parents, School Associations/PTA's and School Boards or their successors.

Question 4: I agree for a need for more flexible local arrangements but would be concerned that the Powers of the School Board would be lost or "watered down". Currently the School Board has certain legal powers in relation to the management of schools which seem to be replaced with only the need to consult, now necessarily acting on the wishes of the board/forum.

Question 5: Yes, I believe the need for election disuades some parents from becoming involved. The only time elections should be required is for the office bearers within the board.

Question 6: Yes, but I would go further and required the authority to support PTA's and School Associations too which have an equally important part to play in the development of the school as a community.

Question 7: Yes, although I can only see this being of use in urban areas where there are a number of schools in close proximity. It would help to develop inter-school harmony where there may be current conflict.

Question 8: Where there is no existing board then this would be necessary. Where there is an existing board then it would be important to involve the authority in the development of the constitution of the new forum. Equally at this point there could be discussion to ensure the powers of the forum are more robust than just a requirement on the authority to consult them, the forum will require real powers to have any effect on school development.

Question 9: No, I would suggest there is a need for part of the constitution to be set by the SE during the consultation phase of the draft bill. This could cover the issues above giving more strength to the forum's views on local educational issues. Other parts of the constitution could be developed and agreed locally to meet local needs, i.e. the number of members, meetings, co-opted members, voting etc.

Question 10: I agree the parents should be in the majority, however I think there needs to be a requirement, in law, for there to be representation on the forum by the head teacher or another member of the senior management of the school. This would ensure attendance and involvement of the school.

Question 11: I would suggest there is an option for the looked after child's social worker to be a co-opted member for the period the child is at the school.

Question 12: Yes, I would go further however, there is a suggestion that all parents assisting with school activities should be checked and I think that will discourage involvement of individual parents. The only need for disclosure checks should be when there is unsupervised access to children, or where the activity involves situations where the children may be more at risk. i.e. not needed for a disco being run but should be considered for overnight trips, camps etc.

Question 13: I believe the headteacher should be required to attend, other non-members should be permitted to attend by invitation to deal with specific issues. That invitation should also be facilitated by the forum where a non member asks to address the forum.

I would expect local councillors to be co-opted members of the forum.

Question 14: Unless considerable financial support is given to the forum many of these functions will be beyond many forums. I believe the forum should have the power to require the education authority to undertake surveys etc on behalf of the forum. i.e. to prepare, circulate and evaluate surveys on parent's views. The forum can then comment on behalf of the parents to the school by taking account of the survey.

It is important that the forum is given adequate support from the school and the authority to complete the functions listed.

It is equally important that the headteacher reports to the forum on performance, standards etc.

Question 15: No I think it would be valuable to leave this area open to meet local needs.

Question 16: I agree that the forum should be able to act as agents of the authority. However, my view is that PTA's/School Associations hold a different function and are more involved in the development of the social and community side of the school. I would not propose the forum should be a combination of these two distinct groups, the PTA's should continue as independent bodies from the school operating in accordance with locally agreed constitutions with the support of the authority and the school.

To combine these two groups would inevitably result in more lengthy meetings which would put many parents off becoming involved.

Question 17: Yes I would agree with these obligations. There needs to be a recognition also of the requirements under the Freedom of Information Act for the authority to provide information, this may render the "reasonable request" open to interpretation under that Act. the provision of funding and "in kind" support will be vital for success and needs to be resourced appropriately.

Question 18: Yes

Question 19: I would suggest there is already a legal obligation on Authorities to provide this information under the Freedom of Information Act. Including the requirement here will strengthen that requirement.

Question 20: I do agree provided the current involvement of the School Board is not diluted. I think it should be a requirement for an executive member of the forum (where one exists) to form part of the selection panel for senior posts to the school. It should not be a case the forum is consulted but actively involved with an equal "voice" on the final selection decision.

Question 21: N/A

Question 22: Yes

PLEASE NOTE: THE ABOVE MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED FROM THE INTERNET.