

**Respondee information form**

Please complete the details below and attach it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately:

Name: Ian Balmer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of consultation: **MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – INVOLVING PARENTS BETTER IN SCHOOLS**

1. Are you responding as:

- an individual?  x
- on behalf** of a group or organisation?

2a. INDIVIDUALS:

Do you agree to your response being made public (in SE library and/or on SE website)?

- Yes  x
- No

2b. **Where confidentiality is not requested**, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (**please tick one** of the following boxes)

- Yes, make my response, name and address all available
- Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address
- Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address  X

2c. ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

Your name and address as respondees **will be** made available to the public (in the SE library and/or on SE website). Are you content for your response to be made available also?

- Yes
- No

3. SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

We will share your response internally with other SE policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

- Yes  X
- No

**MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – INVOLVING PARENTS BETTER IN SCHOOLS  
CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

***Question 1: Do you agree with the placing of a new duty on education authorities to promote parental involvement?***

Disagree. Facilities already exist in School Boards, PTA's etc and indeed individual representation to school for those parents who want to be involved with their child's education  
  
I would suggest that the introduction of Parent Forums will erode individual parental involvement.

***Question 2: Do you agree that education authorities should be required to prepare new Strategies for Parental Involvement (SPIs)?***

Yes, so long as it does not interfere with the legal standing of the School Board.  
I would suggest, schools, education authorities have been toiling for years to encourage parental involvement. I do not accept that it is the format or ethos of school boards that is responsible for the parental apathy.

***Question 3: Do you agree that incorporating these Strategies in existing Annual Statements of Education Improvement Objectives and School Development Plans (as set out in the 2000 Act) is the right way for education authorities to set out their intentions? Or should this be done in some other way?***

Education Authorities could convey their intentions/objectives to school boards and to an open forum of interested parents.

**Question 4: Do you agree that the current system of parental representation i.e. School Boards should be replaced by a more flexible system of parent forum, as decided locally by the parents, in a way which best suits them and their school best?**

Disagree: School Boards are required because they are supported by legislation. A more flexible approach will encourage division and diversity amongst parents, due to there being no boundaries to work within. Parent Forum's will be inclined to assume they have more power over schools and indeed the education authority. If this power is questioned by any authoritative organisation the 'Forum could see this as an erosion of their powers and political interference. "Whims" rather than genuine concerns/issues in relation to education could become the norm.

**Question 5: The Bill does not prescribe the means of appointment to the new forums (elections to Boards are mandatory) but provides for parents to decide this locally. Do you agree?**

Disagree: Parent Forums are designed to create divisions between parents. This would encourage more than one "Forum". Who would decide the creditable 'Forum? The possibility exists for each Forum to adopt the education strategies of a Political Party. The whole idea of Parental Forums smacks of a vehicle for political interference.

**Question 6: Do you agree that education authorities should have a new duty to promote the establishment of a parent forum in each school and to support their operation?**

Disagree: Education Authorities should be encouraged to support their school boards. However, if a parent has a genuine concern/issue then it would be remiss of an 'Authority not to assist that parent independently of the 'Board or Parental Forum. In any event who are expected to start a Forum? If the Executive are counting on present School Board members then I doubt that will happen. School Board members should walk away.

**Question 7: Should the Bill provide for 'composite' parent forums where this is the preferred option of parents in each school in a combined school or cluster of schools?**

Disagree: Each school has its own identity and should be represented as such. What is good for one does not necessarily mean it is good for all.  
How many parent Forums per school is the local Authority allowed to support. There appears to be no regulation of the actual number of Forums per school.

**Question 8: Do you agree with the proposal for the involvement of education authorities to get the initial parent forum off the ground? If not, what alternative would you suggest?**

Perhaps the correct question to be asked is would the Education Authority be requested to support a Parental Forum who have diverse or political agenda?  
Who would have the power to dissolve any radically and detrimental 'Forum, who is working in their own clique with no mandate from other parents.  
As above the local authority and executive should not count on present school board members for assisting in the formation of parent forums.

**Question 9: The draft Bill leaves the forum's 'constitution' to be determined locally, either by the parents or initially under the education authority scheme. Do you agree with this approach? If not, what alternative would you suggest and why?**

The advantage of the school board is that their constitution is legal. A parent forum may be mis guided and try to write in power to support their new found empowerment!!!  
If the authority do not like the forum's constitution what powers do they have?

**Question 10: Do you agree that membership of a parent forum should be confined to parents (the broad definition) of children attending the school or individuals co-opted by the parent forum? Should parents always be in the majority?**

School Boards recognise parents should be in the majority. Without legislation or a selection process who decides who gets to represent a Parental Forum?

**Question 11: Do you have a view as to how the needs of looked-after children should be addressed and catered for in the Bill?**

Yes: Communicate with the school board or indeed the school direct.

**Question 12: Do you agree that the Bill should not result in parent forum members being subject to automatic disclosure checks but that members, like any other parent, should only be checked when engaging in activities defined under the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003?**

Dependent on the amount of “flexibility and “empowerment” given to the forum they may through ignorance exclude it from their constitution. But without guidance are they likely to realise that there is other legislation dictating procedures.

**Question 13: On balance, do you agree that 'rights of attendance' for certain non-members of a parent forum should not be a part of the new arrangements? In other words do you agree that non-members of the parent forum should attend only by invitation or do you believe the headteacher should have the right to attend, with the councillor or other individual by invitation?**

School Boards have the right balance. All people concerned with immediate responsibility for a child's education are represented even though the head teacher's obligation is to advise board members. If there is more than one forum at a school which is the head teacher councillors etc going to favour? A head teacher I would imagine would want to go to these forums to hear what is being discussed and issues raised. This will lead to forum members mis interpreting their powers.

**Question 14: Do you consider these functions appropriate to parent forums? Would you suggest removing or adding any, or making some obligatory and others optional?**

Maintain status-Quo.

**Question 15: The Bill has been drafted to allow the parent forum to find out and report the views of parents in the school on any matters which are of interest or concern to them. Do you agree with this open-ended provision or would you suggest defining the areas of interest more restrictively?**

This is no different from school boards who benefit from the support of legislation. Parents responses are important with no power of what benefit are they and how can issues be raised and answered?

**Question 16: Do you agree that the Bill should designate parent forums as 'agents' of the education authority for the purpose of their dealings with third parties, and that the issue of insurance should be looked into further? Or do you take an alternative view?**

Depends what parental forums are being asked to do. Who Knows? I doubt even the Scottish Executive.

**Question 17: Are these the appropriate obligations to place on education authorities in relation to their working with parent forums?**

Education Authorities are accountable to parents first and foremost. There is nothing in the Bill to suggest that they are accountable to Parent Forums. Parent Forums merely become a talking shop!!!

**Question 18: Do you agree with the provisions requiring education authorities to provide financial support or support in kind to parent forums or would you suggest alternative arrangements?**

Financial support should always be provided for school boards who are legally accountable for those funds. Without office bears who on the parent forum is responsible and answerable for these funds?

**Question 19: Do you agree with the proposed duty on education authorities to provide advice and information to individual parents on request, on matters relating to the education of their children?**

Yes.

**Question 20: Do you agree that education authorities should be enabled to replace the current system of appointing headteachers and deputy headteachers with more modern, flexible processes and procedures?**

Is there are a problem with the present format. The Bill suggests that Parent Forums “will be involved”. It fails to stipulate the extent of the involvement. Dislvement of power!!

**Question 21: If you do not agree that the principle of parental involvement should be retained by the involvement of parent forums in the new senior appointments processes, please give your reasons.**

Responsible and properly trained lay people have an important and independent role to play. As in School Boards.

**Question 22: Do you agree with the proposal to require education authorities to establish complaints procedures in relation to the way they exercise their functions under the Bill?**

I find it hard to accept that the education authority do not already have a complaints procedure in place. In the interest of accountability and transparency complaints should always be investigated.

I would think this would be open to abuse by politicians who may have been invited onto a forum and skillfully shaping their mandate.

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**Piaskowski K (Karen)**

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**From:**  
**Sent:** 23 May 2005 17:06  
**To:** Parental Involvement Bill  
**Subject:** response to Parent Forum bill

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