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

Sent: 31 May 2005 12:47

To: Parental Involvement Bill

Subject: 338

Response from the Parentzone - Parental Involvement questionnaire

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Responding as: An individual

Individual: Yes

Confidentially: Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Behalf of groups: Yes

Sharing responses / future engagement: Yes

Question 1: Yes, education authorities should have a duty to promote parental involvement, however individual schools and school boards should also have such a duty. However although parental involvement is very important in enhancing the learning experience for young people, it should not be used as an excuse to abolish school boards. It is also important that the emphasis on "parents" does not diminish the role of the school in the wider community. The quality of educational provision is an issue for the whole community not just those who are parents of children at school.

Question 2: I have concerns that this will add to the bureaucratic structure at education authority level which sits heavily on individual schools. the duty would be better placed with individual schools. The Bill also appears to provide for a once-only consultation with parents over the strategy, allows education authorities to avoid consulting with parents forums if they get their strategies in place before the formation of the forums, and talks vaguely about consulting other interested parties without defining who these are. The whole Bill is vague in many parts which will result in poor legislation and unexpected outcomes.

Question 3: This way seems as appropriate as any.

Question 4: No. School Boards provide a relatively simple and straightforward means of formally involving parents and other members of the community in the management of the school. The powers they give to members, though minimal, and their formality helps give them status which encourages membership and attendance. There is a strong case for enhancing the powers of School Boards (and Headteachers) as has been done successfully in England.

Question 5: No. The proposed changes are woolly, incoherent and naively idealistic.

They could result in either a small vocal group of current parents determining the nature of the forum or the education authority dictating it by default. There is no mechanism for review or measuring effectiveness, and poorly constituted and ineffective forums could continue in perpetuity

Question 6: No. The best means of promoting parental involvement should be a duty of and be determined by Schools and School Boards. What evidence is there that parent forums are the best means of of promoting parental involvement? It is a pity that the consultation document does not provide any evidence of good practice from other parts of the world

Question 7: Whilst there may be circumstances where composite forums would be sensible and practical in general I suspect that this would not be the case. It would largely depend on how far the schools already work closely together in terms of policy and management.

Question 8: No. It should be the responsibility of the School and School Board, if they consider that a "forum" is the best means of promoting parental involvement.

Question 9: No. I do not think that parental involvement can be achieved by the creation of these, powerless forums. School Boards with a nationally laid down constitution and enhanced powers should be the formal means of involving parents and the wider community, and parental involvement should be promoted by a range of activities. The proposed arrangements will produce a myriad of different schemes with little coherence and no obligation to demonstrate effectiveness.

Question 10: No. Education in the community belongs to the community (who pay the taxes to fund it be they parents or not) and is of vital importance to the whole community. It is not right that only parents with children at the school at any particular time should be directly "involved".

Question 11: Carers should have the same rights and status of parents in respect of these arrangements.

Question 12: Yes

Question 13: No. Under the proposed arrangements there is no obligation on the headteacher, councillors, or education authority officers to attend. The headteacher, in particular, should have an obligation to attend, or if unable to do so send a senior member of staff. It is essential that forums operate with the guidance of professional staff, otherwise there is a danger that their deliberations could be informed by rumour, hearsay and gossip about the school and its activities.

Question 14: There is nothing inappropriate about these proposed functions, however my experience is that without clear powers and responsibilities people are not prepared to commit time and energy to forums and committees. The proposed forums have no powers and can be ignored at will by both the school and education authority. Members will quickly lose interest in mere "talking shops".

Question 15: Whilst not wishing to be restrictive, this kind of open-endedness can result so easily in all sorts of inappropriate matters being aired. Clear guidelines on what are appropriate areas of interest and what are not are required.

Question 16: Whilst not agreeing with the concept of parent forums I consider that if they are to exist as a replacement for school boards they should have such designation, but if the parents decide on an "all parents" forum, or some other non-conventional arrangement then issues of agency and insurance will be most interesting.

Question 17: Yes, although most of the obligations would best be placed directly with the Headteacher and School Board, rather than through the Education Authority. The obligations should be extended to individual parents and not just to forums.

Question 18: yes, via a budget to the School

Question 19: Yes.

Question 20: It is hard to see how the current legislation prevents modern methods of appointment being utilised. However it is essential that members of School Boards (or their replacement) continue to be involved directly in such appointments with full equality in the selection process. My own view is that it should be compulsory that members of Boards or forums who are involved in the selection process should have undertaken approved training in appointment procedures, particularly equal opportunities matters.

Question 21:

Question 22: Yes