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Plaskowski K (Karen)

From: Greg Dempster [ahts@btconnect.com]
Sent: 01 June 2005 16:00
To: Parental Involvement Bill
Subject: 389 - AHTS response

This email has been received from an external party and
has been swept for the presence of computer viruses.

Parental involvement team,

Please find attached the AHTS response and covering letter.

Best regards.

Greg

Greg Dempster
AHTS General Secretary
Gardyne Road
Dundee
DD5 1NY

Tel: 07910 291918
Website: www.ahts.org.uk

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... Representing School Leaders

Parental Involvement Bill
Schools Division
Area 2B
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Gardyne Road
Dundee
DD5 1NY

31 May 2005

Making the difference – improving parents' involvement in schools

I attach our response to the above consultation and a completed 'respondee information form'.

As you will see from our response we agree with most of the proposals as set out. We very much welcome the intention of this Bill – to encourage parents in all parts of Scotland to take a greater interest in the education of their children and to get more involved with their local school.

AHTS believes that the flexibility outlined for parent forums will allow parents a greater opportunity to get involved in schools in a way that is meaningful to them and positive for education in Scotland.

If anything in our response is unclear please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Dempster
General Secretary

The **Association of Head Teachers in Scotland** represents Head Teachers and Deputies from nursery, primary and special schools in Scotland.

Tel: 07910 291918 e-mail: ahts@btconnect.com website: www.ahts.org.uk

Respondee information form

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

Name: Association of Head Teachers in Scotland
Address: Gardyne Road, Dundee, DD5 1NY

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

1. Are you responding as:

an individual?

on behalf of a group or organisation? **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 **X**

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 – improving parents' involvement in schools

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes but, as is catered for in the draft bill, it will be important for Local Authorities to have at the ready a baseline/starter model in case there is no agreement locally on how to move forward.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes but it will be important to make absolutely clear that this must be a unanimous decision by parent forums from all the schools concerned.

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?

Yes, education authorities must be involved to explain to parents what a forum is, what it might do and how it might be organised. In cases where there is already strong parental involvement, through whatever mechanism, education authorities may simply want to make the parents aware of the changes in legislation and some possible models for parent forums. To keep to the spirit of the draft bill education authorities must not seek to impose new models where there is already a mechanism in place which is working for the parents and for the school.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes.

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?

It is important that there is some mechanism for recognition of these children in parent forums otherwise it is possible that their interests could be marginalised. Examples of representatives might include foster carers, representatives from foster homes, lead social worker

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?

Yes.

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?*

It is clear from debate of this point in the media that most contributors consider that the head teacher should have a right of attendance at parent forums. This has been taken as the starting point for our response.

AHTS believes that the Local Authority, rather than the Head Teacher, should have a right of attendance. This should not be confined to the Head Teacher (although under normal circumstances we expect that Head Teachers would perform this role) as in cases of staff absence or other commitments a nominated representative should be able to attend in place of the Head Teacher. This may be another representative of the school or an official from the local authority.

Councillors and other individuals should attend by invitation only.

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?*

These functions are appropriate. AHTS welcomes the approach taken in this draft Bill which allows parent forums the flexibility to decide which issues to address. To maintain the spirit of the proposals – local definition of what form forums should take and what they do – no functions should be obligatory.

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?

Agree.

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?

Yes.

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

Yes.

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?

AHTS agrees with these provisions but it should be made clear that the funding of parent forums must not have a negative impact on school budgets.

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 head teachers and deputy head teachers with more modern, flexible processes and procedures?

AHTS agrees that there is a need for some flexibility in relation to head teacher/depute appointment processes to allow local authorities to tailor detailed procedures to local circumstances. However AHTS is firmly of the opinion that the appointment processes across Scotland should be governed by clear principles. We recommend that these are as follows:

- Parental involvement at all stages
- The process should be led at all stages by an education professional
- At key decision points in the process (long leet, short leet, selection) the education professional should have a casting vote.

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.

See answer to Q. 20.

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?

AHTS agrees that an appropriate complaints procedure should be put in place. However it may be that complaints regarding a failure to exercise obligations under the Bill would be dealt with under an authority wide complaints procedure. This would mean that it would be part of a recognised and existing procedure rather than it being a separate procedure which would probably be used infrequently and as a result may not be well understood or implemented.