

Your Ref: --

Our Ref: Parents/F

1 June 2005

Education & Community Services L22
Corporate Director

Woodbank, 30 Edinburgh Road

Dumfries DG1 1NW

Parental Involvement Bill Consultation
Scottish Executive Education Department
Schools Division
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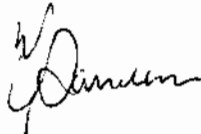
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Dear Sir

**MAKING THE DIFFERENCE - IMPROVING PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN
SCHOOLS - RESPONSE FROM DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY COUNCIL**

I am pleased to enclose the response from Dumfries and Galloway Council to the above consultation document. This response has been agreed by the Education and Community Services Committee of the Council.

Yours sincerely



Fraser Sanderson
Director of Education and Community Services
FS/AMB

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RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM: 422

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: **FRASER SANDGESSON**

Postal Address: **WOODSANK, 30 EDINBURGH RD., DUMFRIES DG1 1NW**

- 1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)
 - (a) as an individual go to Q2a/b and then Q4
 - (b) **on behalf of** a group/organisation go to Q3 and then Q4

INDIVIDUALS

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website)?

- Yes (go to 2b below)
- No, not at all We will treat your response as confidential

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

ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

3. The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available?

- Yes
- No We will treat your response as confidential

SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

4. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive 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
- No





MAKING THE DIFFERENCE - IMPROVING PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS - RESPONSE FROM DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY COUNCIL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This response has been agreed by the Education and Community Services Committee of Dumfries and Galloway Council and incorporates within it views expressed by parent representatives at two meetings held across the region.

The response does not direct itself in sequence to the 22 consultation questions posed but does cross-refer responses to these questions.

2. Response

- 2.1 Respondents would have welcomed a set of proposals which were a little less open-ended since they felt that it was difficult to respond appropriately without having something more concrete to consider. While we recognise that the approach being taken is one of trying to emphasise that there is a wide variety of options available, the message which has emerged is that whatever "shape" the eventual forum is to take, it has to operate to a clear structure. In many ways, this would be down to the local authority's Strategy for Parental Involvement and attached constitution(s).
- 2.2 There is strong support for the work and operation of School Boards over the years. They have confirmed and enhanced the role which parents have to play in school education, they have offered support to headteachers in schools, they have made considerable efforts to represent the views of parents, they have provided a valuable lobbying role on behalf of the school with the local authority and they have attracted the commitment and dedication of many parent representatives.
- 2.3 On the other hand, there is recognition that there is a need for change since the structures are intimidating to some and a disincentive to many parents from becoming engaged. There is no obvious "magic wand" available to bring more parents into active involvement in a school but a less formalised approach would undoubtedly help. (Q.4)

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- 2.4 While present legislation offers some protection to the rights of parents, it can also be restrictive and there may be merit in removing it altogether but requiring the local authority to establish, in consultation with parent groups, a framework for the involvement of parents suited to the particular circumstances of a local authority and to the range of schools within it. This would be subject to inspection through the cycle of inspections of local authority provision by HMIe. Proposals from local authorities should be included within their annual planning arrangements and should be reflected in School Improvement Plans. (Q.3)
- 2.5 We would support the proposal that it should be the responsibility of the local authority to draw up a Strategy for Parental Involvement and this should be developed in discussion with parental groups and, once agreed, should operate for all groups provided that it offers within it flexibility to meet differing situations. A "free for all" approach would not be acceptable although the proviso would be that the SPI be such as would receive the support of the majority of school representative groups. (Qs 2, 6, 8, 9)
- 2.6 The SPI should allow for the establishment of a parent forum which represents a "cluster" of schools since we can anticipate an increase in cluster management arrangements and in a "Learning Communities" approach - both of which might lend themselves to a combined forum. (Q.7)
- 2.7 Parents should always have the majority of places on the forum but the capacity to co-opt from outwith the parent body should be retained since such appointees can bring particular expertise from the wider community to the working of the group. It should be possible, however, for such appointments to be on a fixed, short-term basis if appropriate to a particular initiative. (Q.10)
- 2.8 Looked After Children and Young People present particular challenges within schools although these most often relate to ensuring that they are given whatever additional support might be required to allow them to develop to their full potential. Carers have as great a vested interest as parents and, while every effort should be made to retain confidentiality where desired, headteachers have a responsibility to ensure that their voice is heard. (Q.11)
- 2.9 There should be no requirement for automatic disclosure checks other than of those engaged in activities defined under the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003. (Q.12)

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2.10 The involvement of the headteacher as a member of the School Board is greatly valued by parent members and by the local authority. The proposed forums should be based on the concept of a "partnership" and this should give the headteacher entitlement to a place on the forum. A similar situation pertains for local Councillors who are regarded as an important intermediary between parent groups and officers of the local authority. It may be that electoral changes from 2007 will make it increasingly difficult for a local Councillor to identify with a particular group of schools. There should, however, be a place by entitlement for the local Councillor.

There is no mention of the place of the Church representative in respect of Roman Catholic schools. The Church representative should also have a place by entitlement within the parental forum framework - insofar as Catholic schools are concerned.

2.11 While the forum should exist to research and report on the views of parents on matters of interest, there should be clear guidelines in place to define the parameters to what can legitimately be subject to the involvement of the forum. The functions of the forum, broadly, should be in the following areas:

- Researching and reporting to headteacher and local authority the views of parents on matters relating to school performance and activities.
- Developing structures and approaches which would allow for the widest possible involvement of parents in the wider activities of the forum.
- Supporting school management and staff in the development of children and young people.
- Providing links with the local community and with associated schools. (Q.14)

2.12 Parent forums should be regarded as "agents" of the local authority with a requirement that the local authority explore all issues relating to insurance cover for events in which the forum might be involved. (Q.16)

2.13 Parent forums should be funded appropriately by the local authority but this must be on an equitable basis (although "equity" may not necessarily mean a straight formulaic approach since there could be consideration given to different circumstances of schools) and the proposal that parent forums could be as large or small as the parent body might wish could create difficulties in this area. (Q.18)

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- 2.14 In relation to funding, SEED must recognise that the implementation of these proposals will require additional resourcing for local authorities not only for direct funding of parent forums but also for the provision of initial and on-going training and support. (Q.18)
- 2.15 There will be value in reviewing present arrangements for the appointment of staff to senior promoted posts but, whatever approach might emerge, there should be a clear role for the involvement of parent representation from the school / school cluster involved. What "involvement" might mean should be teased out at local level with parent representatives but there is no doubt that parents should have a significant - but not controlling - role to play. (Q.20)