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Respondee information form

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

Name: The Moray Council, Educational Services

Address: Council Office, High Street, Elgin. IV30 1BX

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?

2a. INDIVIDUALS:

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

Yes

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

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



Donald M Duncan
Director of Educational Services

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EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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Our Ref: JT

Your Ref:

30 May 2005

Scottish Executive Education Department,
Schools Division,
Area2-B North,
Victoria Quay,
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Dear Sirs,

Parental Involvement Bill Consultation

Please find enclosed the response of senior officers within Educational Services, Moray Council, to the above mentioned draft Bill.

Elected members have been invited to respond separately as have School Boards and staff in schools.

Yours sincerely

John Trodden
Quality Improvement Officer

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MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – INVOLVING PARENTS BETTER IN SCHOOLS

CONSULTATION QUESTION TEMPLATE [FOR PARENTZONE]

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

Yes, we agree that this is an appropriate duty to place on education authorities. We support the stated aim underpinning this duty, namely, to encourage greater and better quality parental involvement in their children`s education .

However, whilst we recognise the important role parents play in supporting school education, it would be helpful to define this role more clearly in regard to , “. . . the child` s widest learning experience.”

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

Yes, we recognise the importance of preparing a Strategy for Parental Involvement which will set out how the authority will support parental involvement in their children`s education.

It would seem to be both sensible and appropriate to consult with parents to ensure that proposed strategies are matched to any needs that parents may identify to support their involvement.

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, this is consistent with current practice, for example, in regard to authority improvement objectives which derive from the National Priorities.

School Improvement Plans would then contain action plans for parental involvement which are based on the overall authority SPI.

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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?

The Consultation commentary recognises that the School Board system has worked well for some schools and parents. It would appear that the election process for School Boards, for example the preparation of candidates statements, has been a significant factor in discouraging parents from participating. Some flexibility is required to combat this, but it would be a challenging, if not impossible task, for an authority to support a multiplicity of Parents Forums with diverse structures and terms of reference. We feel that some common structure should be established for Parents Forums.

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, it is clear that less formal means can be employed to engage parents in the new forums. It is not necessary for there to be formal procedures, in that any parent should be allowed to be a member. However, it will be easier for the authority to support procedures if these are agreed for all schools.

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, we agree that the authority should promote parental involvement through encouraging parents to set up a Parents Forum at each school. This would form part of the overall authority strategy for parental involvement. We would envisage that the authority would provide support and advice as necessary.

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?

It is much more likely that parents will want a Parents Forum for each school. Composite parent forums could result in the creation of tensions between parents whose focus is their child and their local school. If a composite Parents Forum is the preferred option, regulations would be required to ensure that the interests of all parents are taken into account.

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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, the authority is uniquely placed to support schools and parents in the first establishment of parents 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?

It would be helpful if some structure and guidance was provided here. It will be very difficult for the authority to support forums with a range of different constitutions. Communication issues, in terms of maintaining lists of main contacts, will be difficult. Set procedures for the proper conduct of business are fundamental. Clear guidance about the role of the Parents Forum in regard to confidential matters involving named individuals is essential. For these reasons, certain provisions should apply to all forums.

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 we agree that membership should be as defined. Parents should be in the majority as they are currently as School Board members. Some guidance in regard to co-opted members would be helpful, for example, someone who brings a local community perspective to the work of the 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?

The local authority/social work department or foster parent should have a right of parental attendance.

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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, we agree that this should be the case.

However, clear guidance would need to be provided to Parents Forums about when Disclosure checks become necessary. Guidance is also required to identify who is responsible for arranging and funding Disclosure checks.

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?

We believe that the headteacher, local councillor, and director of education or his representative should have a right of attendance, and each will bring a valuable perspective to deliberations.

There is a strong likelihood that, if the headteacher has no right of attendance, distance will emerge between the headteacher and the forum. The headteacher has a key role to play in providing information for the forum, and in communicating his or her vision for the school.

There can be no partnership between the school and the Parents Forum without the headteacher's right of attendance.

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?

All of the functions listed are appropriate. However, the headteacher, through whole school audit, already has a duty to find out the views of parents about quality and standards and a wide range of other issues. However, the forum working with the headteacher or the authority might assist the process by providing the mechanisms for collecting and interpreting this evidence. The forum should be required to report annually to the parent body on its activities. A duty should also be placed on the Parents Forum to promote contact between the school, parents, and the local community.

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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?

*Clear guidelines should be established in terms of the areas in which the Parents Forum should not involve itself.
Otherwise, any other area of concern may be discussed.*

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, we agree on the basis that we would want to see the Parents Forum replace School Boards and PTAs/PAs.

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

The five obligations which are listed are all appropriate.

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?

It would seem reasonable that Parents Forums are provided with an appropriate level of funding to cover training and administration needs.

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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?

We agree with this proposal. Parents have always had the option of approaching the school or the authority for more specific advice or information about their child's progress. This represents good practice.

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?

Yes, we agree that appointment procedures for senior promoted staff in schools should be designed to secure high quality leadership. Appointment procedures should reflect best practice elsewhere.

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.

The principle of parental involvement in new senior appointment should be retained.

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?

We agree. It is important that a complaints procedure is established to facilitate a resolution in those rare cases where a breakdown in relationships occurs.