

# respondee information form

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

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ALLOA

CLACKMANNANS (H.R.C) FK10 1EX

Consultation title: **Making the difference – Improving parents’ involvement in schools**

**1. Are you responding as:** (please tick one box)

(a) an individual?  (go to 2a/b)

(b) **on behalf of** a group or organisation?  (go to 2c)

**2a. INDIVIDUALS:**

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

Yes (go to 2b below)

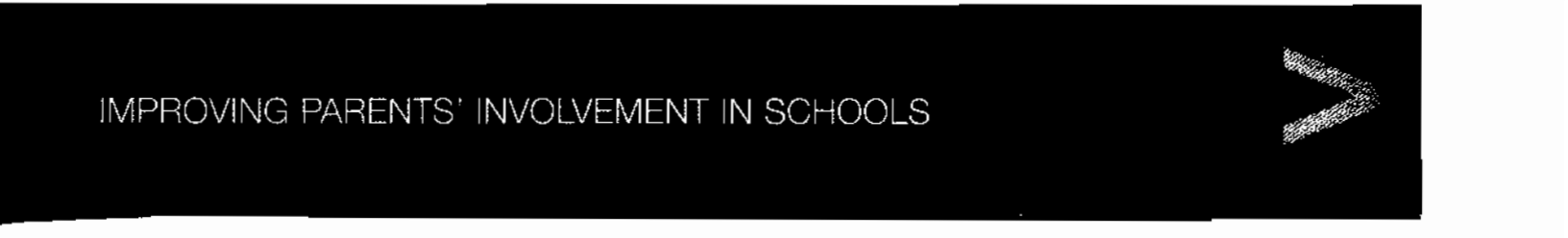
No, not at all

**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 SE to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes

No

## Services to People

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Our Ref: DJ/SW

Your Ref:

Date: 7 June 2005

Parental Involvement Bill Consultation  
Scottish Executive Education Department  
Schools Division  
Area 2-B North, Victoria Quay  
EDINBURGH EH6 6QQ

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Parental Involvement Bill Consultation**

Please find enclosed the response and responsee information form from Clackmannanshire Council regarding the above.

Yours faithfully

pp **Dave Jones**  
**Director, Services to People**

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**CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION**

**MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – IMPROVING PARENTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS**

The purpose of the legislation being proposed is that of repealing the 1988 School Board Act, without really challenging the thinking behind it. The quasi-managerial function given by this form of governance has long since seen very few parents want to be involved or feel strongly about whether others are involved.

Most parents are interested in their child's education and would like some say over how and with what degree of satisfaction it is delivered. This is at the level of the individual and not the collective. Wider consultation by schools with parents over things that matter to them such as frequency and timing of parents meetings; celebration assemblies; displays and performance, may give parents a feeling of being more involved. The questions posed in the document “Making the Difference – Improving Parents’ Involvement in Schools” have been put to meetings of school board members and senior school staff at Director’s briefing sessions in Clackmannanshire.

**Question 1**

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

It is essential to involve parents as much as possible in the education of their children. Without parental support the child does not have the best opportunity to gain the most they can from their education. This, however, does not mean that parents must be involved in detail with the schools operation. Parents should be broadly supportive, or at least involved in how they may support, and help in the maximising of opportunities for the pupils who attend that school.

**Question 2**

*Do you agree that education authorities should be required to prepare new strategies for Parental Involvement (SPIs)*

With 32 authorities and the opportunity to prepare new strategies placed upon each of the authorities, then 32 different routes may be chosen. Whilst diversity is in many ways a good thing a wild and unstructured system is not. It would have been more realistic to have agreed strategies once the process of deciding on parent forums, or other means of consultation and involvement of parents, has been agreed. Those strategies could then be framed as a few formatted models which authorities could recommend to their local area.

### **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.*

If we are to have these strategies then it would make sense for them to be in the Statement of Education Improvement Objectives and for schools to put them in their development plans. This will only work if there is a structured way of actually demonstrating types of models that can be chosen. The authority may then select one or more of those models available and recommend them to schools. Alternatively, they may choose a single system, in a direction upon which they have consulted and agreed, as the way forward.

### **Question 4**

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

Whilst School Boards and their formality have possibly outlived their usefulness in terms of the quasi-governorship role that they occupy, it is extremely difficult to see what benefit there is in an amorphous melange of structures such as the parent forums seem to present.

### **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?*

The difficulty over this is who actually represents whom. The problem arising may be that having put in place a parents forum, a sub-group of such parents then decide to break away and form another one. It could be that the school ends up with two or more forums competing against each other: hardly the best way forward in ensuring that the school is responsive to childrens need and parental demand for pupil success.

### **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?*

It is absolutely essential that an education authority promotes the establishment of the forum, but only if it is a body that they can support easily. It is pointless trying to support an amorphous body which does not appear to be representative. If we can get some kind of structure around the development of the forums then it will be necessary to create support mechanisms. This is going to be an extremely complex area to manage. A support operation will be very difficult if the way in which the parent forum is set up becomes complex. It may be difficult to see clearly which grouping or sub-grouping has the prime role.

### **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?*

Since it is going to be difficult enough to set up a parents' forum in one school, it is doubtful whether a cluster or combined schools parents forum could be an effective way forward.

### **Question 8**

*Do you agree with the proposals for the involvement of education authorities to get the initial parent forum off the ground? If not what alternative would you suggest.*

If we do not involve education authorities then this could be even more of a disaster than it is likely to be with their involvement. At least through the education authority there is one point of reference for parents to come together. Without it, anarchy seems to be the only way forward, especially if parents' forums are to be given some statutory position such as is recommended later in the draft paper.

### **Question 9**

*The draft Bill leaves the forums "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 is vital that there is a constitution. As mentioned above, in an earlier response, if we had a few models to work on then a sample constitution could be set up by the education authority and taken on, or slightly amended, by the parents forum. It is doubtful that many parents forum would want to begin from scratch, but if they did want to do so it is likely that the type of constitution they produced could make life extremely difficult for other parents, teachers, or the education authority to operate or consult with.

### **Question 10**

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

It is important that the majority should be parents and that a few co-optees should be allowed, but not a majority over existing parents.

### **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?*

Looked after children is an issue which should be handled very cautiously by the parent forum. It is of great importance in many cases that a looked after child is not in any way identified; their individual situation should not be brought to the attention of groups outside of those who carry out the education function in the school and look after their social welfare. It is certainly not something which the parent forum should be closely involved with.

### **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?*

This seems to be absolutely right. Only parents' forum members in unsupervised contact with children should be checked. There should be no automatic disclosure check on parents' forum members.

### **Question 13**

*On balance do you agree that the "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 Head Teacher should have the right to attend, with the Councillor or other individual by invitation?*

It is absolutely essential that the Head Teacher is in attendance at these meetings as advisor and as support; without this the forum really cannot function on behalf of the school as a whole. There can be no logic in excluding the head teacher from a parent forum that is going to have some statutory rights over parts of the life of the institution. It is equally important that local councillors have the opportunity to attend and be invited to take part in discussions.

### **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?*

Without some link back to the head teacher and the staff, it is difficult to see how the parents' forum can seek to raise quality and standards in the school. As to the second point "*supporting those managing the school and developing personality talents and mental and physical abilities of each child to its fullest potential*", this, surely, can only be carried out if head teacher and staff representative are part of the parents' forum. Certainly the remaining two areas are ones which must be obligatory.

### **Question 15**

*The Bill has been drafted to allow the parent forum to find out and report 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?*

It is extremely difficult for this type of open-ended provision to exist satisfactorily. It can, undoubtedly, lead to certain cases where individuals are identified and become the butt of concerted effort by a limited number of parents. There must be some balance placed upon the way in which parents can take the views of other parts of the parent body. This must be within rules that prevent them from looking at individuals and individual situations and the pursuit, single-mindedly, of areas of possible conflict.

#### **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?*

Unless it is clear what role the parents forum is to have, and the issue of formats conforming to some set of criteria is agreed, then the ability of the forum to deal with third parties should be limited. It would be quite wrong for parent forums to be completely free and also act as an agent of the education authority; then to be insured as such. It cannot be appropriate that responsibility for contracts entered into is then covered by the education authority without any form of control over constitution or behaviours.

#### **Question 17**

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

There is nothing wrong with any of the issues that would become education authorities duties as long as the parents' forum has some statutory and controlled basis on which it has been set up.

#### **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 quite right to give education authority support if we have a well thought out process for setting up the parents' forum. If they are then operating within their constitution, education authorities should support parents' forums financially and with staff as a point of reference.

#### **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?*

It is not an area which needs to be a new education authority duty. Surely it is always the position that an education authority should provide advice and information to individual parents; why should this become a new duty placed upon the authority?

#### **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?*

It would seem only logical that there needs to be new procedures if parents forums are to be set up. The difficulty is how it could be agreed that the appointment process should be undertaken. Maybe, when the parent forums have more substance to them in terms of an agreed format and clear constitution, then the process of setting up interview panels for heads and deputies can be put in place. Whatever happens with the setting up of the parents forum there needs to be an established procedure that the authority can use to ensure parental representation on any appointment panel.

#### **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 response to question 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?*

Any effective authority will have a complaints procedure already available and useable by parents and others alike. This would hardly seem to be necessary as a requirement under a Bill, but should be the normal way in which authorities operate.

**Dave Jones**  
Director Services to People