

907

Piaskowski K (Karen)

From: Magaidh Wentworth [magaidh@cnag.org.uk]
Sent: 07 June 2005 16:45
To: Parental Involvement Bill
Subject: 907

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Please find attached response to consultation from Comann nam Parant (Naiseanta).

Le durachd

Magaidh Wentworth

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DRAFT GAELIC SCOTTISH SCHOOLS (PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT) BILL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

JUNE 2005

Background

Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) is a parental support organisation for parents who have children attending any level of Gaelic medium education from pre-school through to secondary. Local Comann nam Pàrant groups are represented on an area basis on the national committee.

Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation “making the difference – improving parents involvement in schools”.

Although research indicates that the majority of parents currently have low levels of involvement in schools this is probably not true of parents with children in Gaelic medium education (GME) who because they have chosen GME as a system of education that they wish for their child and have actively ‘opted in’ to the system tend to remain *involved*. Parents with children in GME are also *represented* at both local and national level by Comann nam Pàrant (CNP) groups. GME was established as part of the education system mainly as a result of *parental pressure* and parents recognised the need for parental bodies that would represent their views with the schools, local authorities and government and established CNP groups in order to do this. As each group in an area represent parents of children from pre-school through to secondary they are not attached to one school and parents also tend to be involved in school boards and parent-teacher associations.

We agree that there is a need for improvement with regard to *parental representation* and *parental involvement* in education, especially secondary education and at local authority level.

Many parents complain of lack of information on what their child is doing at school and how best they can support them. As well as needing information on their own child’s progress parents need to be informed and consulted on educational policies and given an opportunity to respond and express their views on any proposals that will affect their child’s educational experience. Parents have a right to be informed, involved and represented in all matters relating to the education of their children and to be effective ‘Parent Forums’ need to give parents real powers and not less than they currently have under the present School Board system.

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

Agree

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

Agree

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?

Agree

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?

Disagree. As stated in the consultation document 'the current School Board system has worked well for some schools and parents'; could the system not therefore be improved and built on rather than introducing a new form of parental representation that will actually diminish the powers that parents currently have? The current system for representing parents could be strengthened within schools, local authorities and at national level and parents given real power to influence education policy.

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?

Disagree. Parents of children in GME are very often a minority group within a school and there has to be some means of ensuring that they are properly represented on the parental body and guidance should be issued.

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?

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?

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?

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?

Disagree. There needs to be guidance on how forums would be constituted.

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?

Agree

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?

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?

Agree

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?

The current school Board requirement for headteachers to attend meetings as advisors should be maintained to ensure effective communication between parental representatives and the school.

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?

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?

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?

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

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?

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?

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?

The Executive must ensure that parents retain their current role in the senior appointments process.

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.

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?

Agree

Magaidh Wentworth
Parental Officer
7.6.05

Respondee information form

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

Name: ___MagaidhWentworth

Address: 5 Caolshràid Mhìcheil, Inbhir Nis IV2 3HQ

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

1. Are you responding as:

on behalf of a group or organisation? Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)

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

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

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