

## 1. Purpose

- a. This policy has been refreshed in order to provide a supportive framework in which all parents can engage meaningfully in the education of their child and in the ethos and life of the Scottish Borders Council school they attend.
- b. The aims of this policy are to:
  - Raise awareness amongst parents and staff of their role as partners in the education of children and how these roles are complimentary
  - Highlight the need to build good relationships between parents and school staff by encouraging mutual trust, respect and realistic expectations in the essence of Scottish borders Council Respectful Relationships Policy
  - Ensure communication between home and school is effective
  - Increase the opportunities for parents to increase their understanding of the education their child receives
  - Ensure parents feel welcomed and involved in the life of their child's school
  - Support parent groups such as Parent Councils to play a valuable role in building good relationships between and among parents, schools, support services and the wider community
  - Encourage all parents (the parent forum) to express their views on their child's education in general and have confidence that their views will be listened to where respectful communication is used by all parties
- c. Scottish Borders Council has an ambitious vision for children and young people in the Scottish Borders:

“We will encourage them to be ambitious for themselves. We will keep children and young people at the centre of everything we do and we will develop our services to support and empower them becoming:-

  - Confident individuals
  - Effective contributors
  - Successful learners
  - Responsible citizens”
- d. The legal framework for parental involvement is the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, 2006. In addition to establishing new responsibilities for local authorities and new rights for parents, the Act replaced the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988.
- e. There are three main levels of parental engagement described in the Act:
  - Learning at Home
  - Home/School Partnership
  - Parental Representation

## 2. Corporate Context

- a. Improving attainment and achievement levels for all our children and young people, both within and out with the formal curriculum is identified as key priority 2 in the Council's Corporate Plan 2012/13 to 2017/18.

### **3. Background**

- a. Scottish Borders Council produced a previous version of the Parental Involvement Policy in 2006 which covered all legal requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 and was intended to support the establishment of parent councils in all Scottish Borders Schools. A parental working group worked together to establish the principles that they felt were important to develop a policy that had meaning for both parents and schools.
- b. Parental Involvement in Scottish Borders Schools has evolved significantly since the original policy was written. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and the implementation of Journey to Excellence facilitated by HMIE have both contributed to a higher level of understanding of the importance placed on Parental Involvement.
- c. In 2011/2012 Scottish Borders Council conducted a Validated Self Evaluation into "How well are parents involved in the life and work of the school". This resulted in a series of recommendations that have been used as a starting point for this policy refresh.
- d. A small working group of parents and teachers was set up to review the policy with the additional information now available. The group met on four occasions to review information that was out of date, requiring to be removed or modified and to come up with realistic ways of implementing new developments and recommendations.
- e. Consultation with Parent Councils and Pupil Councils commenced in September 2013. This policy reflects the feedback from that consultation.

### **4. Promoting Parental Involvement**

- a. All the evidence shows that when parents, carers, family members and the wider school community are effectively engaged in their children's education, the outcome for children is more positive. It is very clear that parents have the most influential role in a child's education, as children only spend 15% of their life in school (or alternative informal learning). In working together in a positive way with realistic expectations and understanding, the aim is to ensure that every child does the best they can at school and beyond.
- b. Parental Involvement should be recognised as a whole school approach where Head Teachers, Teachers, Support Staff, Parent Councils, Parents and the wider community act together in the best interests of all children attending the school.
- c. A parent who has a personal concern/view regarding their child's education must contact the Head Teacher directly. The Head Teacher will arrange to meet with the parent if appropriate to discuss the parent's views/concerns and provide information on our complaints procedure (See section 11).
- d. The use of the term 'parent' in this policy is defined as follows:

“a guardian and any person who is liable to maintain **or** has parental responsibilities (within the meaning of section 1(3) of the Children Scotland Act 1995) in relation to, **or** has care of a child or young person.”

Examples include:

- Non-resident parents who are liable to maintain or have parental responsibilities in respect of a child
  - Carers who can be parents
  - Others with parental responsibilities e.g. foster carers, relatives and friends who are caring for children and young people under supervision arrangements
  - Close relatives, such as siblings or grandparents caring for children who are not looked after or are under home supervision arrangements
  - Looked After Children (LAC) is the term given to the statutory duties and responsibilities placed on local authorities in respect to children and young people in their care. The looked after young person or child is any child for whom the local authority has legal responsibility. The local authority is the corporate “parent”
- e. A proactive approach will be taken to ensure the parents of looked after children – and those accommodated by the authority – will receive communications from their child’s school and be encouraged to participate in their child’s education.
- f. The term ‘Parent Council’ covers all parent groups that have been set up in the Scottish Borders under the parental involvement legislation.

## **5. Working Together (Supporting Home/School Partnerships)**

- a. Scottish Borders Council, schools and parents will work together to:
- Provide our children with:
    - Challenge and enjoyment in learning
    - Breadth of learning
    - Progression routes
    - Depth of learning
    - Personalisation and choice in learning
    - Coherence of learning
    - Relevance of learning (link school learning with life skills)
  - create a positive ethos and climate of respect and trust based on shared values across the school community
  - Ensure our children are Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included by working collaboratively with services available to support parents
- b. Examples of ways school communities can work together include:
- The development of a clear policy on volunteering in schools

- Creating and maintaining a database of volunteers by actively encouraging parents to register their skills and interest in supporting school life from one off events to regular activities
- Identifying areas of the curriculum that parents can enhance by sharing their skills and experiences e.g. occupation, gardening, commerce, special interests etc
- Considering a flexible approach to the timing of events that meets the needs of both parents and staff
- Considering open days and events that have a clear educational purpose, are well planned and supported with expected outcomes for parents and followed up with an evaluation to inform further events
- Organise and promote events where parents can directly participate in learning about the four contexts of Curriculum for Excellence
  - Ethos and life of the school
  - Curriculum areas and subjects
  - Opportunities for personal achievement
  - Interdisciplinary learning
- Organise and promote 'fun social events' that create opportunities for building relationships with parents and the wider community – and at the same time raise funds for the school
- Promote the involvement of parents in the process of school improvement planning, including identifying priorities, creating actions plans and reviewing progress:
  - We asked.....
  - You said.....
  - We did.....
- Share good practice of Parental Involvement in all aspects of school life across all Scottish Borders Schools
- Create and share a yearly Parental Involvement calendar for parents to be able to manage their time to support/attend school events

## 6. Supporting Learning at Home

Examples of how school communities can support parents to help their child's learning are:

- a. **Preschool**
  - Publicise and encourage parents to join in national initiatives to recognise, value and encourage learning at home
  - Provide information on national parenting programmes available to parents
  - Provide advice and information on how children learn at nursery, with information on activities parents can do at home to support their child's learning
- b. **Primary**
  - Provide parents with a yearly programme of learning for their child's class
  - Provide information to parents on the methods used to teach children literacy and numeracy

- Support parents to recognise their own knowledge and skills and not be afraid to use them to support their children
  - Engage parents in sharing information on what children do at home to link to classroom activities
  - Offer opportunities for family learning
  - Encourage parents to take an active role in the development and use of Personal Learning Plans (PLP's), learning logs etc by working with their child to identify wider achievement
- c. Secondary
- Provide advice and information on how pupils can study, revise and prepare for exams
  - Provide early notice of revision and exam dates
  - Provide opportunities for parents to learn more about Broad General Education (BGE) and the more flexible approach available to pupils in the senior phase – qualifications, vocational study, college or informal learning (16+ transitions)
- d. All schools
- Engage parents and pupils in the creation and regular review of a school homework policy
  - Consider how to promote the principles of Curriculum for Excellence via the homework policy (e.g. practical activities)
  - Provide information on how parents can support their children's learning at home by making the link from classroom learning to every day life and life skills
  - Encouraging dialogue between pupils and parents at home to share learning via homework activities
  - Support parents to recognise their own knowledge and skills and not be afraid to use them to support their children
  - Offer opportunities for family learning
  - Provide continuing information on new developments in education to parents

## **7. Communications**

- a. All methods of communication should be considered by schools, parent councils and parents dependant on the need of the school community – newsletters, group call, e-mail, telephone calls, letters, flyers, suggestion boxes, mail boxes, websites and social media channels and many more. Regular feedback (minimum yearly) should be obtained from parents to ensure that their communication needs are being met
- b. A genuine two-way exchange of information between Scottish Borders Council, school staff and parents is in the best interest of every child attending a Scottish Borders School
- c. Trust and openness is encouraged
- Notification of any significant changes to a child's learning should be given to parents at the earliest opportunity
  - Parents are encouraged to raise their concerns, be listened to and responded to, as long as their concerns are reasonable and

consideration is taken as to how they communicate with the school and Scottish Borders Council

d. Expectations

- Parents should recognise that the school staff's first and foremost priority is the education and learning of all children attending that school and that all staff have responsibilities that may not enable them to respond immediately to a phone call or a request to meet
- Parents should expect administration staff to either offer the chance to speak with another member of staff who is available or to leave a message that will be passed on to the staff member requested. School staff should try to respond within 24 hours to a phone call, or arrange to meet with the parent within 5 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances
- If parents contact school staff out with school hours, the school staff reserve the right not to respond until the following working day
- If correspondence with parents becomes overwhelming and detrimental to the day to day running of the school, Scottish Borders Council will request a meeting with the parent to agree a communication plan

e. Technology and Social Media

- Scottish Borders Council will provide advice for schools on developing their website
- Scottish Borders Council has created a 'Schools Social Media Pack' for school communities who wish to use an official Scottish Borders Council School Media Channel (Facebook, Twitter, alternative or developing channels will also be considered via the application process)
- The use of electronic surveys and consultations should be utilised where appropriate to obtain all parents views (views of the parent forum) with clear instructions on how to feedback views to make the process as easy and accessible as possible for parents.

## 8. Removing Barriers

- a. Each school community is different and therefore will experience different barriers to successful Parental Involvement (cultural, ethnic and lifestyle choices) therefore it is important for school communities to strive to identify potential barriers and do what they can to overcome these barriers and engage with harder to reach parents
- b. Thought and consideration should be made for working parents, non resident parents and parents of looked after children in being flexible within reason to provide opportunities for them to be involved in the life of the school
- c. School staff and partner agencies (Integrated Children's Services (ICS) and Community learning and Development (CL&D)) will work together to

support parents who find it difficult, for whatever reason, to become involved

- d. Translation and interpretation services will be provided by Scottish Borders Council
- e. Learning for travellers children will be supported
- f. Support will be made available to parents who choose to educate their children at home themselves 'Home Educators'
- g. Information on mediation and advocacy services will be made available for parents with social, emotional, mental health or learning disabilities who are in receipt of health or social care services

## **9. Parental Representation**

- a. All parents who have a child attending a school are automatically members of the Parent Forum for that school. This allows parents to have their collected views represented by their elected Parent Council Members
- b. One of the key roles of Parent Councils is to represent the collective views of parents to the school and to the authority. They have a duty to ensure that the views they provide are truly representative. Scottish Borders Council reserves the right to ask for evidence that Parent Councils have sought the views of parents in general before raising concerns at Parent Council meetings (this can be notes from talking to parents, questionnaires and surveys or holding meetings to ascertain parental views)
- c. Scottish Borders Council will ask for views in a number of different ways to give parents and pupils a say on school and on authority issues and the decisions we make
- d. Examples of how school communities can encourage and support Parent Councils include:
  - Providing training for parent council members to help them fulfil their role
  - Providing a budget to support the running of a Parent Council based on the size of the school roll and whether it is a primary or secondary school
  - Providing public liability insurance for Parent Councils
  - Encouraging Parent Councils to set up their own communication network to share information
  - Providing parental leaflet templates to parent councils which can then be tailored for their school (information for new parents)
  - Providing general guidance on behalf of school staff regarding what Scottish Borders Council believe to be reasonable support for Parent Councils with regards to staff time and resources
  - Encouraging work with Pupil Councils to identify joint areas for working together within the school community

- Providing access to a Parental Involvement Officer for support and guidance
  - Arranging at least 2 Parent Council Chairs Forum (PCCF) meetings per year with all Chairpersons invited to attend with the Council's Executive Member for Education and senior education management to discuss various education initiatives, budgets and specific topics such as service redesign and review.
  - Involving parents in the recruitment and appointment of senior staff
    - The views of parents are sought as part of this process to enable Parental involvement through Parent Councils at key stages in the recruitment process including short listing of candidates and the interview process
    - Training will be provided to enable parents to participate in the process with confidence and make informed choices
- e. Representatives from both primary and secondary schools will be invited to participate in a Parent reference Group. This group will provide direct responses to senior education management on key school/education issues

## **10. Providing an Effective Complaints System**

- a. Scottish borders Council welcome parents raising concerns and complaints and regard this as an opportunity to improve the services on offer
- b. Information on how to raise a personal/individual complaint regarding the education and learning your child is receiving can be found on the Scottish Borders Council website [www.scotborders.gov.uk](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk) or in the school handbook
- c. Scottish Borders council will always try to resolve complaints as early as possible in our complaints process – in dialogue with the school
- d. At all times parents and schools should demonstrate the principles of respect for each other, should this become a problem Scottish Borders Council will take steps to mediate and manage the situation

## **11. Implementation of the Policy**

- a. The policy will be implemented with effect from August 2014
- b. School communities (School staff, support staff, parent councils and parents) will be expected to work together towards delivering the key elements of this policy and should be able to provide evidence of the implementation of some of the suggested examples from each category:
  - Learning at Home
  - Home/School partnership
  - Parental Representation
- c. A Parental Involvement questionnaire will be made available to school communities to self evaluate their current position such that school staff, Parent Councils and parents can work together to identify actions and priorities that they can work on together



- d. Continuous Professional Development in Parental involvement will be developed for school staff and parent council members to support the implementation of this policy
- e. Evidence of the implementation of this policy should be identified in the Standards and Quality Report, and actions for improvements in Parental Involvement should be identifiable in School Improvement Plans
- f. School communities will be asked to provide evidence of work being undertaken on each of the main three elements of the parental involvement legislation in order to share good practice

## 12. Consultation on Development of the Policy

- a. In refreshing the policy the following groups have been consulted:
  - All Head Teachers and staff in schools
  - The elected representatives of head teachers on the Schools Strategic School's Policy and Performance Group
  - Senior officers within Education
  - Community Learning and Development
  - Integrated Children's Services (ICS)
  - SBC's Child Protection Unit
  - All parent Councils
  - Parents

## 13. Policy Monitoring and Review

- a. The implementation of this policy by schools will be monitored in a yearly report (generated by a Policy, Planning and Performance Officer) to be reviewed by the Head of schools, or her delegate
- b. The policy will be reviewed on a three yearly cycle by a Policy, Planning and Performance Officer and if appropriate a report will be submitted to the Education Committee to request changes. The first scheduled policy review will be in June 2017

## 14. Equalities

- a. It is anticipated that there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this policy.

## 15. Accessibility Statement

- a. This policy can be made available in large print, on tape or in other languages

## 16. Version Control

<b>Name of Document:</b> Parental Involvement Policy 2014		<b>Version Number:</b> 1
<b>Approved by:</b>		
<b>Date first approved:</b>	<b>Date of Review:</b>	
<b>Name of officer responsible for the review:</b> Lisa Anderson, PPP Officer, ELL		

**Changes to the policy**

<i>Paragraph No:</i>	<i>Wording that changed</i>	<i>Reason for change</i>

DRAFT