



**PEOPLE DEPARTMENT
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS POLICY 2015

1 PURPOSE

1.1. This policy has been refreshed in order to provide a supportive framework in which all parents can engage meaningfully in the education of children and young people and in the ethos and life of the Scottish Borders Council (SBC) school they attend.

1.2. The aims of this policy are to:

- Raise awareness amongst parents and school staff of their roles as partners in the education of children and young people
- Highlight the need to build good relationships between parents and school staff by encouraging mutual trust, respect and realistic expectations
- Ensure communication between home and school is effective and conducive to developing an effective partnership
- Increase opportunities for parents to improve their understanding of the education children and young people receive in school
- Ensure parents feel welcomed and can be involved in their child's school and that their contribution to a child or young person's learning is recognised and valued
- 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 to express their views on a child or young person's education in general and have confidence that their views will be listened to.

1.3. SBC 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.

1.4. This policy will enable SBC to meet the legal requirements related to parental involvement outlined in 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.

1.5. The 2006 Act provides for three broad levels of parental engagement which SBC has adopted as the 3 broad themes and these are outlined within this policy:

- Learning at Home
- Home/School Partnership
- Parental Representation.

1.6 This policy will also contribute towards the delivery of priority 2 in the Council's Corporate Plan 2012/13 to 2017/18, improving attainment and achievement levels for all children and young people, both within and out with the formal curriculum.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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 and to develop a policy that had meaning for both parents and schools.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 In 2011/2012 Scottish Borders Council conducted a Validated Self Evaluation which considered how well parents are 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.
- 2.4 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 4 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.
- 2.5 Consultation with Parent Councils and Pupil Councils commenced in September 2013. This policy reflects the feedback from that consultation.

- 2.6 This policy is aligned with other Scottish Borders Council policies including the “Respectful Relationships” policy and will link with the “Positive Behaviour and Relationships in Learning Settings” policy (currently in draft).

3 PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- 3.1 There is evidence from around the United Kingdom that shows that when parents, carers, family members and the wider school community are effectively engaged in a child or young person’s education, the outcome for children and young people is more positive. It is very clear that parents have the most influential role in a child or young person’s education, as children only spend 15% of their life in school (or alternative informal learning). When schools and parents work together in a positive way with realistic expectations and understanding, the aim is to ensure that every child and young person does the best they can at school and beyond.
- 3.2 Parental Involvement should be recognised as a whole school community approach where Head Teachers, Teachers, Support Staff, Parent Councils, Parents and the wider community act together in the best interests of all children and young people attending the school.
- 3.3 A parent who has a personal concern/view regarding a child or young person’s education should contact the school directly. A member of staff will arrange to meet with the parent where appropriate to discuss the parent’s views/concerns.
- 3.4 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 or young person
- 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 or young people 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 known as the corporate “parent”.

- 3.5 A proactive approach will be taken to ensure the parents of looked after children and young people and those accommodated by the authority will receive communications from their child's school and be encouraged to participate in their child's education where Scottish Borders Council are authorised and there is not a non-disclosure around where the young person is being educated.
- 3.6 The term 'Parent Council' covers all parent groups that have been set up in the Scottish Borders under the parental involvement legislation.

4 WORKING TOGETHER (SUPPORTING HOME/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS)

4.1 Scottish Borders Council, schools and parents will work together to:

4.1.1 Provide children and young people 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).

4.1.2 Create a positive ethos and climate of respect and trust based on shared values across the school community.

4.1.3 Ensure children and young people are Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included by working collaboratively with services available to support parents.

4.2 Examples of ways school communities can work together include:

- Actively encouraging parents to register their skills and interest in supporting school life ranging from one off events to regular activities
- Enabling parents to share their skills and experiences eg job, hobbies, special interests
- 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
- Organising and promoting sessions where parents can directly participate in learning about the 4 contexts of Curriculum for Excellence
 - Ethos and life of the school
 - Curriculum areas and subjects
 - Opportunities for personal achievement
 - Interdisciplinary learning
- Organising and promoting 'fun social events' that create opportunities for building relationships with parents and the wider community combined with fundraising potential

- Promoting the involvement of parents in the process of school improvement planning, including identifying priorities, creating actions plans and reviewing progress
- Sharing good practice of parental involvement in all aspects of school life across all Scottish Borders Schools
- Creating and sharing a yearly Parental Involvement calendar for parents to be able to manage their time to support/attend school events.

5 SUPPORTING LEARNING AT HOME

5.1 There are a number of different ways in which schools can encourage parents to support a child or young person's learning at home and examples are found categorised in 4 phases.

5.2 Early Years and Child Care settings:

- Recognise that parents are children's prime educators
- Provide advice and information on what and how children learn, with information on activities parents can do at home to support their child's learning
- Publicise and encourage parents to join in national/local initiatives to recognise, value and encourage learning at home
- Provide information on parenting programmes and supports available to parents.

5.3 Primary Schools:

- Provide parents with information on what children will be learning in class regularly
- 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 planning, learning logs etc by engaging with their children about their learning and identifying wider achievement.

5.4 Secondary Schools:

- Provide advice and information on how pupils can develop their learning and study and revise
- Provide early notice of revision and exam dates and support for this
- 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)
- Provide opportunities for parents to discuss issues around parenting young people.

5.5 All schools:

- Recognise and value how parents support their child's learning both within and out with school
- Engage parents and pupils in the creation and regular review of a school home learning
- 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 everyday 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.

6 COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1 All methods of communications should be considered by schools, Parent Councils and parents dependent on the need of the school community. Examples of methods are newsletters, group call, e-mail, telephone calls, letters, flyers, suggestion boxes, mail boxes, websites and social media channels. Regular feedback should be obtained from parents to ensure that their communication needs are being met.
- 6.2 A genuine two-way exchange of information between SBC, school staff and parents is in the best interest of every child attending a Scottish Borders school.
- 6.3 Trust and openness is encouraged, for example through:
- Notifying parents of any significant changes to a child's learning or behaviour at the earliest opportunity
 - Encouraging parents to raise their concerns which will be listened to and responded to
 - Communicating concerns in a timely and reasonable manner to school staff to facilitate a prompt and appropriate response.
- 6.4 It is important that parents, school staff and all other staff have realistic expectations and that the needs of children and young people are at the centre of the all activities. It should be recognised that:
- School staff have as a priority the education of 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 respond within 24 hours to a phone call or

arrange to meet with the parent within 5 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances

- Parents should endeavour to contact school staff during working hours unless there is a serious emergency.

6.5 It is becoming more common for additional forms of technology such as social media to be used for communication purposes. This is often more convenient for parents and can be more efficient for schools and the following points are for guidance:

- SBC will provide advice for schools on developing their website
- SBC has created a Schools Social Media Pack for school communities who wish to use an official SBC social media channel
- The use of electronic surveys and consultations should be utilised where appropriate to provide the opportunity for all parents to share their views with clear instruction on how to feedback views to make the process as easy and accessible as possible for parents.

7 REMOVING BARRIERS

7.1 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 to ensure effective engagement with all parents.

7.2 Thought and consideration should be given to working parents, non-resident parents and parents of looked after children, to ensure that they can be involved in the life of the school.

7.3 School staff and partner agencies will work together to support parents who find it difficult, for whatever reason, to become involved.

7.4 Translation and interpretation services will be provided where needed.

7.5 Learning for children and young people from travelling families will be supported.

7.6 Support will be made available to parents who choose to educate their children at home.

7.7 Information on mediation and advocacy services will be made available for parents who may benefit from such services.

8 PARENTAL REPRESENTATION

- 8.1 Current legislation provides for all parents who have a child attending a school to be automatically members of the Parent Forum for that school. This allows parents to have their collected views represented by their elected Parent Council Members.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 SBC will ask for views in a number of different ways to ensure parent's views are considered on school and on authority issues and the decisions that are made.
- 8.4 SBC will support Parent Councils in a number of ways including:
- 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 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.
 - 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.
- 8.5 Parent volunteers from both primary and secondary schools will be invited to participate in a discussion group called the Parent Reference Group. This group will provide direct responses to senior education management staff on key school/education issues.

9 PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

- 9.1 SBC welcomes parents raising concerns and complaints and regards this as an opportunity to improve services.
- 9.2 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 or in the school handbook.
- 9.3 Scottish Borders council will always try to resolve complaints as early as possible in the complaints process.
- 9.4 At all times parents and schools should demonstrate the principles of mutual respect for each other, keeping the needs of the child or young person at the centre.

10 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- 10.1 The Policy will be implemented with effect from January 2015.
- 10.2 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 broad theme:
 - Learning at Home
 - Home/School partnership
 - Parental Representation.
- 10.3 A Parental Involvement questionnaire will be made available to school communities to self evaluate their current position and enable school staff, Parent Councils and parents to work together to identify actions and priorities to take forward.
- 10.4 Continuous professional development in Parental Involvement will be developed for school staff and Parent Council members to support the implementation of this policy.
- 10.5 Evidence of the implementation of this policy should be identified in the Standards and Quality Report and actions for improvement in Parental Involvement should be identifiable in School Improvement Plans.
- 10.6 School Communities will be asked to provide evidence of work being undertaken on each of the 3 core themes of this Policy in order to share good practice.

11 CONSULTATION ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY

11.1 In refreshing the policy the following staff groups have been consulted:

- All Head Teachers and staff in schools
- Parents
- Parent Councils
- The Strategic Schools Policy & Planning Group
- Senior Officers within Children & Young People's Services
- Community Learning & Development
- Child Protection Unit.

12 POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

12.1 The implementation of this policy by schools will be monitored in a yearly report.

12.2 The Policy will be reviewed in line with the standard procedure within the People Department. If changes are to be made within the life of the policy, a report will be submitted to the Executive (Education). The policy will be full updated in 2018.

13 EQUALITIES

13.1 This Policy seems to improve inclusion and reduce exclusion through promoting the development of positive relationships between schools and parents.

14 ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

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

15 VERSION CONTROL

Name of Document: Parental Involvement in Schools policy		Version Number: 1
Approved by: Education Executive		
Date first approved: January 2015		Date of Review:
Name of officer responsible for the review: Lisa Anderson, PPP Officer, CYPS		
Changes to the policy		
<i>Paragraph No:</i>	<i>Wording that changed</i>	<i>Reason for change</i>