

# EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

CABINET – 3 DECEMBER 2008

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

### Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the new Parental Involvement Strategy and to agree to adopt the strategy as East Ayrshire Council's formal Parental Involvement Strategy.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council Strategy for Parental Involvement – Brief Overview

##### Developing the Strategy

The Department of Educational and Social Services established a Parental Involvement Strategy Group in October 2006 to develop a draft parental involvement and consultation strategy. Membership of the group included representatives from the following areas:

- Parents
- Head Teachers
- Quality Improvement Officer
- Head of Service

- 2.2 The Parental Strategy attached to this Cabinet paper as Appendix 1 is the result of this work. It was circulated to key stakeholders including parents, Parent Councils, Head Teachers, schools and associated partner agencies to ensure it reflected the broad parental perspective.

As part of the consultation exercise the Department ensured that the views of early years providers and parents were considered. The Department recognised the valuable role Childcare Partnerships provide within the authority as a good channel for communication with parents of pre-school and nursery children and with service providers.

The views of pupils were obtained through existing systems, such as, Pupil Councils, Dialogue Youth and the use of local and authority-wide activities for consulting children and young people.

The department also put in place a range of communication and consultation mechanisms to ensure parents and other stakeholders had ready access to the draft parental involvement and consultation strategy using a wide range of channels including the Parent Councils and the Council Web site. A summary leaflet and flyers related to the strategy were circulated to all parents of children in East Ayrshire.

Social Work colleagues were also involved in the consultation and contributed to the section on corporate parenting.

Comments and feedback from stakeholders were sought from February 2008 – August 2008. After the consultation period the views received were used to amend the draft strategy and produce the final Parental Involvement and Consultation Strategy attached to this paper.

The Parental Involvement Strategy takes account of the requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. It covers three levels of engagement with parents, these are:

- Learning at home
- Home/school partnership
- Parental representation

- 2.3 The strategy highlights the central role of parents in supporting children's learning and recognises that parents/carers are by far the most important influences on young people's lives. Parents who take an active and supportive role in their children's learning make a difference in improving attainment and achievement.
- 2.4 It is recognised that schools can benefit from developing positive partnerships with parents by involving them in all decisions affecting their children's education and learning. The Parental Involvement Strategy highlights the vital role of head teachers implementing effective partnership with parents and sets out advice and guidance on this.
- 2.5 The Strategy also outlines how the authority and schools will work with parents to overcome barriers to parents/carers supporting their children's learning.
- 2.6 The Parental Involvement Act 2006 requires authorities to promote the establishment and provides support for the operation of parent councils. The strategy document explains how the Department of Educational and Social Services will set up a Parent Council Steering Group to be a forum to allow parents to express their views and will seek innovative ways to remove barriers to parental involvement, and nurture and support parental engagement with their children's learning. This will be managed through learning partnerships and through a range of policies at authority and individual establishment level.
- 2.7 The strategy paper also sets out procedures for the involvement of Parent Councils in the selection and recruitment of senior promoted staff in school. The strategy recognises the appointment of a head teacher or depute head teacher is of critical importance to a school and its community and parents have a key role to play in this process. The Parental Involvement Act 2008 requires that East Ayrshire Council involve Parent Councils in making permanent appointments and our recruitment and selection procedures have been reviewed to take into account the requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement ) Act 2006, the Parental Involvement Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations 2007 and the associated Scottish Executive guidance regarding the participation of Parent Councils in the appointment of head teachers and depute head teachers in schools.

Training is also offered to Parent Council members in relation to the appointment process.

- 2.8 The Act requires the Parental Involvement Strategy to set out the authority's arrangements for handling any complaints. The Strategy provides advice and guidance on addressing concerns raised by parents/carers and young people.

### **3. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 The Equality Impact Assessment was fully carried out and communicated to all appropriate people.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this paper.

### **5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The recruitment selection procedures in East Ayrshire Council for the appointment of head teachers and depute head teachers must be updated in accordance with the act. See 2.7.

### **6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The paper supports the community planning theme of promoting community learning.

### **7. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Nil.

### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) adopt the Parental Involvement Strategy attached as East Ayrshire Council's formal policy, and
- (ii) otherwise, note the contents of this report

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

AS/EO'N  
07/10/08

## **List of Background Papers**

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools, Tel: (01563) 576126 or Muriel Reid, Quality Improvement Officer, Tel: (01563) 555650.

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: ANDREW SUTHERLAND**

East Ayrshire Council

Department of Educational and Social Services

**WORKING  
in  
PARTNERSHIP  
with  
PARENTS**

**Strategy for Parental Involvement  
and Consultation**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 published in May 2006, is about improving the involvement of parents in their own child's education and in the life of the school. It aims to help parents to be:
- Involved with their child's education and learning
  - Welcomed as an active participant in the life of the school
  - Encouraged to express their views on school education generally
- 1.2 The Act offers the Department of Educational & Social Services the opportunity to build on the many strengths in parental involvement that have been achieved through the work of School Boards, Parent Teacher Associations and other groups within East Ayrshire schools.
- 1.3 The promotion of parental involvement is a key priority within the Educational and Social Services Department. The Department acknowledge that parents, carers and families are by far the most important influences on children's lives. Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and know them best. The Department recognise this and value greatly the contribution that parents and other family members make in supporting their children's learning, both at school and at home.

## **2. LINKS WITH OTHER LEGISLATION AND POLICY**

- 2.1 The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2008 should be seen within the broad context of legislation and policy which supports children and families. In particular, it reflects the vision of Scottish Ministers' that Scotland's children and young people will become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors by being safe, nurtured, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible.
- 2.2 Some of the main themes of the Act and how these complement other legislation and policies are set out below. In particular, the Act builds on the:
- Education (Scotland) Act 1980
  - Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 (the "2000 Act");
  - Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (the "1995 Act").
  - The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records)(Scotland) Act 2002
  - The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) Disability Discrimination Act 2005.
  - Race Relations (Amended) Act 2000
  - Equality Act 2006
  - Local Government in Scotland Act 2003

## **3. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**

- 3.1 This strategy has been produced in order to provide a supportive and consistent framework in which all schools can actively engage parents/carers meaningfully in the education of their children, and in the wider life of the school. Across schools in East Ayrshire, experience demonstrates that parents who take on a supportive role in their children's learning make a difference in improving attainment, achievement and behaviour. Schools need parent/carer support to help provide each child and young person with the highest quality of education and to encourage all schools to be ambitious and excellent.

#### **4. KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY**

- 4.1 This strategy will ensure that:

- Parents develop an increasing ability to influence the learning of their child
- Recognition is given that parents/carers, families, staff, pupils and other services and agencies have skills and attributes to contribute as partners in education
- Parental involvement is inclusive and encourages all parents and carers to participate as members of the Parent Forum
- Recognition of the fact that some groups of parents/carers need support to overcome the barriers they face in fully supporting their child's education. This also recognises the additional support recurring for those responsible for looked after children and looked after and accommodated children
- Recognition of the valuable role representative groups of parents such as Parent Forums, Parent Councils, and other Parent Associations contribute to developing good relationships between home and school

#### **5. THE AUTHORITY'S COMMITMENT**

- 5.1 The Council is committed to providing an excellent and continually improving education service. All parents/carers should have high expectations of the learning and teaching that is provided for their children, whatever their age, abilities, interests or talents. The Department commitment extends to ensuring that all learners of all ages are enabled to gain the qualifications and experiences necessary for the next steps in their lives. This commitment includes all schools, early years establishments and community learning.
- 5.2 All schools in East Ayrshire aspire to achieve the very best for all children by providing educational experiences through A Curriculum for Excellence and other national developments that will enable children and young people to develop their capacity to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. In supporting this commitment the authority will work in partnership with schools, learners, parents/carers, and other agencies, including those responsible for corporate parenting, to ensure children and young people are nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible.
- 5.3 East Ayrshire endorses the Scottish Government policy which states that, as a corporate parent local authorities in discharging their responsibilities have a challenging role, to act like good parents and it must be a key priority for all service providers to keep the needs of the child or young person at the centre of everything they do for all looked after children and young people and children and young people who are looked after and accommodated.

## 6. STRENGTHENING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

6.1 The Department's strategy for promoting and enhancing parental engagement is founded on three main strands of activity which lie at the core of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006:

- Learning at home
- Home/school partnership
- Parental representation

6.2 The Department will:

- Establish a Parent Council Steering Group to provide a forum to allow parents to express their views on a range of departmental policies and guidelines.
- Continue to actively seek new and innovative ways to remove barriers to parental involvement and to encourage, nurture and support, parental engagement at all level with their child's learning.
- Establish, and provide support to a network of parental involvement and consultation across all Learning Partnerships.
- Ensure effective mechanisms for communication are in place at authority and individual establishment level to enable all parents to access key information and advice on school education, and to provide this in a variety of formats that best suits the needs of parents.
- Through Learning Partnerships, focus on ensuring better co-ordination of services at local level for the benefit of all children and young people, but particularly those most vulnerable.
- Ensure a range of clear and succinct policies are in place at authority and individual establishment level to guide parents and carers in their key roles in supporting and engaging in children's learning.
- Provide guidance and direction to schools to ensure that policies on key activities such as homework and parental involvement and consultation are designed to strengthen parental engagement and increase the confidence of parents.
- Ensure that the principles of personal learning planning within A Curriculum for Excellence are thoroughly embedded in all schools.
- Provide central support mechanisms to establish continuing support for training for Parent Councils.
- Engage Parent Council members more fully in the recruitment process for Head Teachers and Deputies and provide appropriate training to enable council members to fulfil their role.

### 6.3 Learning at Home

The school will:

- Value the learning that takes place in the home by actively seeking the views of parents/carers on their child's progress in learning.
- Encourage an atmosphere in which parents/carers feel able to share their views of their child's educational progress with teachers in as many different ways as possible.

- Identity of a member of staff responsible for parental involvement, engagement and consultation in each school and pre-five establishment.
- Develop activities and practices that encourage and support parent/child activity and help reduce the barriers to parental involvement in children's learning and the wider life of the school.
- Continue to develop a variety of methods for sharing information and communicating with parents.

#### 6.4 Home/school Partnership

The school will:

- Ensure that communication and consultation with parents and carers provides access to key information and advice in a variety of formats that are appropriate for their needs.
- Provide specific and detailed advice and information to parents on their child's progress.
- Involve parents fully in reviewing the progress of their children and planning next steps in their learning.
- Ensure the personal learning planning process promotes dialogue between pupils, parents and teachers.
- Work with colleagues at all key transition stages to ensure full engagement with, and involvement of parents.

#### 6.5 Parental representation

The school will:

- Consult with the Parent Forum as to the format of the Parent Council and support the establishment of the Parent Council.
- Support the operation and ongoing work of the Parent Council as described within the Act.
- Continue to promote a shared responsibility between schools, parents, carers, partner organisations and the community in working together to educate children.
- Support and develop ways of providing information that will help the community of parents engage with the school and their children's learning.
- Strive to overcoming any barriers to parental involvement through partnership working to ensure equality and social justice.
- Enhance the sense of team work and empowered decision making at local level between services, agencies and parents.
- Secure Best Value for the use and deployment of resources.

### **7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

7.1 Ensuring equality in the practices of the Department lies at the heart of the strategy for parental involvement. The Department is committed not only to providing equal access to opportunities for parental involvement and engagement, but to track any discrimination, intended or otherwise, against parents on account of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or age. The Department recognise that ensuring equality also involves making special efforts in our actions to provide for those who may have most to overcome in order to play their full role.

- 7.2 As part of the strategy the Department will take steps through training, raising awareness of the range of barriers, sharing good practice in overcoming barriers, and other measures, to ensure that all staff who have contact with parents understand and provide for those parents who experience difficulty in becoming involved as a result of significant barriers, including for example:
- Time - Parents are busy people. Parents might be working either full time or part time, bringing up young children on their own or have more than one child attending different schools.
  - Family circumstances - Families come in all shapes and sizes and have different needs. Parents may find it particularly difficult to attend meetings if they have a child who is disabled, have a baby or other caring responsibilities, work shifts or work away from home or have a complex family structure with parents who are separated; some might have new partners.
  - Geography - The area parents live in can be a significant factor in how parents are able to be involved with school based activities. Parents and pupils may have to travel some distance to the school and may have difficulty with transport or have to walk through unsafe areas or where children are being educated some distance from their home and live in a hostel.
  - Parents perceptions - Parents may feel uncomfortable in school surroundings for a number of reasons including their own previous experience of school or their cultural background and these perceptions can be a real barrier to parents putting themselves forward.

7.3 This strategy also recognises the fact that Looked After and Accommodated children and young people face many barriers to their success in education. Children who are looked after should have the same education and development opportunities as all other children. The strategy will demonstrate the department's commitment to providing help, encouragement and support to address additional support needs or to compensate for previous deprivation or disadvantage. The department will work with parents, foster carers and residential workers in relation to children who are looked after.

7.4 Most parents of looked after children retain their parental rights and responsibilities. Parents who do not live with their children will still wish to be involved in their education. The Department is therefore committed to working in partnership with foster parents, and where possible, the natural parents to encourage them to support the child or young person to maximise their educational potential.

## **8. APPOINTMENT OF SENIOR STAFF**

8.1 The appointment of a Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher is of crucial importance to a school and its community. Parents have a particular role to play in the process. Parent Councils, as the parents' representatives have a right to be involved in the recruitment process if a permanent appointment is to be made. This involvement will extend throughout the appointment process. When a position becomes vacant, the department will invite the parent council to nominate two members, both of whom must be members of the parent forum, to assist the department in drawing up the person specification, selecting a short list and interviewing the candidates. Training on all aspects of the recruitment procedure will be provided to members of the parent council.

## **9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- 9.1 In implementing a strategy for parental involvement, the ultimate measure of success must be based on achieving outcomes for children that result in them being safe and happy at school and that provide them with opportunities to support them perform to their full potential. In addition, HMIE's quality indicators outlined in 'How good is our partnership with parents?' and key indicators selected from 'How Good is Our School 3' will be used at authority and school level as a starting point of self-evaluation.

## **10. COMPLAINTS**

- 10.1 The Council has a clear Customer Care and Complaints procedure which sets out the Council's commitment to providing high quality services for all the people we serve. The Customer First Service Commitment sets out the standards of customer care service you can expect from East Ayrshire Council.
- 10.2 Practices within the Education Service are firmly rooted in these guidelines and customer standards. Staff in schools and throughout the Department of Educational & Social Services, are here to help you and your child with any questions or concerns you may have.
- 10.3 The Department operates a customer care policy, details of which are outlined in the leaflet "Complaints Procedures for Education Services" available in all schools, educational establishments and offices, libraries, via the Council's website or by telephoning 01563 576109. Likewise if you wish to forward a positive comment or compliment on the service, please do so in the same way.
- 10.4 If you are not satisfied with Council's response to your complaint you may wish to refer your complaint to:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman,  
4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS  
Tel: 0800 377 7330  
e-mail: [ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk)  
[www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)