

**Aberdeen City Council
Parent Involvement Strategy**

June 2014-2017

Update due June 2017

A Strategy for Parent Involvement in children and young people's learning

1. Introduction

Both nationally and locally it is recognised that parents are the single most important influence in their child's development and achievement.

The involvement of parents in their children's learning is recognised as a key element in raising attainment through support, help and encouragement given to children at home and whilst they are at school.

“The more engaged parents are in the education of their children the more likely their children are to succeed in the education system.

School improvement and school effectiveness research consistently shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement. Schools that improve and sustain improvement engage the community and build strong links with parents.

Where schools build positive relationships with parents and work actively to embrace racial, religious and ethnic and language difference, evidence of sustained school improvement can be found.”

J Goodall and J Vorhaus et al September 2011

2. The Purpose of the Parent Involvement Strategy

Aberdeen City Council is required under the Scottish Schools (Parent Involvement) Act 2006 to prepare a strategy that sets our action for parental involvement.

Aberdeen City Council is committed to supporting, helping and encouraging parents to be actively involved in their child's learning.

The Parent Involvement Strategy will contribute to ensuring parents, schools and education services work together to improve the outcomes for all Aberdeen's children

Our Parent Involvement Strategy will:

- Summarise the parental involvement and linked legislation;
- Set out what the authority, schools and our partners are responsible for in supporting engagement in children's learning and the life of the school;
- Set out how the local authority will support schools and parents to make a difference in their child's education.

Authority Expectations

Aberdeen City Council has set out minimum requirements for schools to involve parents in their child's learning and in the life of the school. We expect schools to do the following:

- have face to face meetings with parents who are new to the school or are at key points of transition;
- report to parents on a regular basis about their child's progress, achievement attainment and wellbeing ;
- provide information in the school handbook which includes how the school will engage with parents;
- host regular curricular learning events to share learning with parents and their children;
- have a parent council to represent the views of the parent forum;
- work with the parent council to consult, develop and promote better learning opportunities for children and parents;
- share expectations of home learning - what is required to encourage learning at home and share this information within the school handbook;
- provide opportunities for parents to contribute to the school's improvement plan; and
- collate a skills bank survey of parents to encourage and increase parental involvement, curriculum enrichment opportunities and develop stronger community links.

What do we mean by parents?

Where we use the word "parents" in this document this will refer to anyone with parental responsibilities, a guardian, and/or 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 a child, or has care of a child or young person.

3. Local and National Policy

This section outlines the primary legislation that sets our duty to support parents in their children's learning and the life of the school. It also describes related legislation and local policies to provide a fuller context for this strategy.

Primary legislation

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

The Act provides the framework for supporting parental involvement in school education. It aims to help schools, education authorities and others to engage parents meaningfully in the education of their children and in the wider school community. It requires education authorities to promote the involvement of parents in children's education in schools. It aims to help all parents to be:

- involved with their child's education and learning;
- welcomed as active participants in the life of the school, and
- encouraged to express their views on school education generally and work in partnership with the school.

School Handbook Legislation - The Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012

The guidance aims to provide a framework for Aberdeen city schools to develop, in partnership with their local parents, a School Handbook that reflects the needs and circumstances of each school community. It provides guidance on what and how information can be communicated to parents and carers, reflecting Curriculum for Excellence and the importance of effective parental involvement in children's learning.

Related Legislation

Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014

This act has a major influence on how services work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Areas that are covered in the Act include children's rights, an increase in an early learning and childcare entitlement for three and four year olds and a group of eligible three year olds, the duty to increase the support for looked after children up until the age of 25 if they request it, the introduction of the named person and the Getting it right for every child national practice model and the duty to share information if there are concerns about a child

Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004

This act aims to ensure that all children and young people are provided with the necessary support to help them work towards achieving their full potential. It also promotes collaborative working among all those supporting children and young people and sets out parents' rights within the system.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is centred on the needs of children and their families and defines both parental responsibilities and rights in relation to children. It sets out the duties and powers available to public authorities to support children and their families and to intervene when the child's welfare requires it.

Curriculum for Excellence

Schools and parents can work together to help children develop in the four key capacities; to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. We want our children and young people to be safe, nurtured, active, healthy, included, respected, responsible and given opportunities to achieve their potential. Parents have an important role in helping children develop in these capacities and help celebrate their child's achievements.

Integrated Children's Services Plan 2011 – 2015

The plan has been developed which sets out how it will improve outcomes for children and young people through the services that are delivered by the Council and its partner organisations.

Getting it Right for Every Child Policy (GIRFEC)

Getting it right for every child is the national approach to supporting and working with all children and young people in Scotland. Aberdeen City Council aims to give every child and young person the best possible start in life. We will do this by working together with parents, carers and workers to make sure every child and young person achieves their full potential and is supported to participate in the decisions that affect them

Parenting in Aberdeen 2012

The strategy is intended for everyone working with families within Aberdeen, parents and workers and communities should actively contribute to the chances and opportunities for Aberdeen's children and families.

Corporate Parenting

Aberdeen City Council has a corporate parenting responsibility for all children and young people who are looked after under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our collective responsibilities for looked after children to ensure we support them whilst in our care and to make the transitions into adulthood.

4. Promoting Positive Partnerships for Children, Parents and School

There are three priority areas identified by the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 which we will use to support and develop effective parental partnership in our schools and education services.

We will highlight areas and consider what standards need to be met to encourage good practice and involvement.

- Learning at Home
- Home/school Partnership
- Parental Representation

4.1 Learning at Home

Learning doesn't only take place in the classroom. Much of children and young people's learning takes place at home, through interacting with family, friends and the wider community. As the first and on-going educators of their children, parents should have appropriate information and support to enable them to develop their child's learning at home, in the community and at school.

Parents and those with parental responsibilities can support their child's learning and their school by:

- developing a good relationship with the school and their child's teacher(s);
- attending parents' meetings and open evenings regularly and responding to advice;
- supporting school functions and activities;
- encouraging, monitoring and signing homework;
- discussing school work in the home;
- participating in the personal learning planning process in partnership with the school and outside agencies;
- being involved in family learning projects;
- offering personal support to out of school hours activities;
- encouraging the child/young person's participation in study support, out of school hours learning, Easter and Summer Schools;
- taking part in curriculum workshops;
- supporting the school's positive behaviour policy;
- raising the aspirations of their child; and
- being aware of and promoting, the importance of good physical and mental wellbeing.

Schools can support learning at home by:

- providing information for parents that is clear, specific and targeted and made available in a variety of formats to meet the needs of parents;
- understanding the needs of parents and providing ways of supporting learning at home;
- Being clear about welcoming extended family members to contribute to the school community;
- encouraging parents to take part in their child's learning;
- creating a variety of different opportunities for parents to support learning at home;
- being confident to share with parents how to support learning at home activities;
- using technology to inform and educate parents about reinforcing learning at home or helping to further research topics or cross curricular themes with children;
- providing specific activities for children and parents to do at home;
- supporting children at exam time promoting good sleep, health and exercise routines; and
- supporting parents in their role as educators by engaging a variety of services that Aberdeen City Council and partners provide - Family Learning Team, libraries, PEEP groups, Local Learning Partnerships, Community Learning and Development and nurseries.

4.2 Home/School Partnership

The role of school and parents is a shared responsibility when working together to educate children. Effective home/school partnerships are essential to ensure that children get the most out of their school and learning. When parents and school work together, children do better.

Schools will have parental involvement embedded in all aspects of school life.

All schools will:

- have an ethos of being a welcoming and a belonging community;
- produce a school handbook that provides clear and quality information on all aspects of school life and seek to consult with parents on the content;
- provide a range of events and opportunities, for example open days / learning events that are suitable for parents to attend to support families and the wider community;
- actively engage and provide opportunities for parents to contribute and volunteer to enhance school experience/curriculum;
- provide support to enable parents to build confidence in learning at home;
- promote learning opportunities for families through homework / projects;
- consult and value parent views as part of the parent forum on things will affect their children learning;
- actively involve parent councils in the recruitment and selection of senior management posts;
- take into account the barriers to involvement and participation effecting parents; and
- keep in mind the parental rights and responsibilities of parents who do not live with their child

Fernielea Primary Maths Pack

P4 pupils were involved in piloting a range of Maths Packs which contained games and puzzles designed to improve speed and accuracy in their numeracy work and to encourage the children to enjoy Maths. The Maths Packs were evaluated by the children to ensure they were suitable. The children invited their parents in to school one afternoon so they could introduce the games and activities to them. The Maths Packs then went home with the children and they were encouraged to play them with their parents. The feedback was very positive from both pupils and parents with parents reporting greater confidence in supporting their children in Maths and the children showing significantly improved recall and attitude towards Maths.

Northfield Academy

The school took the decision to move away from the traditional model of an S1 Parents' Evening. The Parents' Evening was replaced with a week-long opportunity so that parents could visit at a time of their choosing. Appointments were offered at different times throughout the week with one member of staff providing feedback on pupil progress in a location that guarantees privacy and comfort. Parents of S1 pupils were contacted by a member of teaching staff and offered an appointment during a specific week. These appointments took place between 8am – 6pm during the week. This has increased parents attendance, confidence and provided flexibility for parents who are working.

4.3 Parental Representation

Every parent should have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy and practical matters affecting the education of their children.

All parents are automatically members of the parent forum at their child's school. As a member of the parent forum parents will be encouraged to support events and activities at the school and to get involved in their child's learning. Each forum is expected to set up a parent council. The parent council will work in partnership with pupils, the head teacher and Aberdeen City Council in the interests of their school.

Aberdeen City Council will support schools and parent councils by offering the following:

- support, training and advice to Head teachers concerning parent councils;
- support, training and advice to individual parent councils;
- financial support to allow parents to operate as a parent council;
- offer information to the wider parent forum in the form of letters, leaflets and email; updates from relevant education organisations that relate to parents and their child's education;
- host a city wide parent council meeting at least once a term to communicate with our parent councils and share current policies and practice in schools;
- support the Aberdeen Parent Council Forum;
- providing meeting facilities for parent council and parent teacher association meetings and related activity; and
- support training and parent information events at school, associated school group (ASG) and authority level.

Many Parent Councils have been working in partnership with their school and other agencies to improve their school and benefit pupils. Here are some examples:

- *unsafe parking and general safety issues relating to do with pupil safety school are common many parents have worked in partnership with schools, councillors and council officers to work for the benefit of the school community;*
- *schools grounds projects –parents, pupils and school staff have worked in partnership to achieve creative, outdoor learning environments for their pupils;*
- *school libraries have been transformed- using the support of committed parent volunteers, many libraries have benefited from updating cataloguing systems, reorganising, redesigning and fund raising for additional equipment and resources. Parents have played a key part in creating fun activities around reading to inspire young readers and develop literacy;*
- *Bikeability is 'cycling proficiency' for the 21st century, designed to give the next generation the skills and confidence to ride their bikes on today's roads. Parents have been trained and involved in the delivering this practical programme; and*
- *Careers fairs in secondary schools have been organised by parent councils with a wide variety of exhibitors attending to give pupils opportunity to explore future careers.*

4. Involving all parents and barriers to involvement

Schools will actively engage and encourage all parents to be involved in their child's education and the life of the school. Schools recognise and respect that not all parents will be open, able or willing to do so.

Every parent wants the best for their child but some may have difficulty in participating in activities to do with school. This does not mean parents are not interested in supporting their child's learning but rather have other factors that play a significant role in preventing them engage with school.

Schools will take account of these factors that act as a barrier, discourage or inhibit parents' involvement in education or contact with the school.

For example

- parents with a negative experience of their own school education
- time – full or part time working
- travelling families
- absent parents
- parents whose child is looked after by Aberdeen City Council
- working parents and give sufficient notice of meetings
- fathers who are not primary carers
- the way we work and engage with fathers
- parents whose first language is not English
- parents who have difficulties with written communication
- parents experiencing challenging family circumstances
- parents for whom domestic or care arrangements may make it difficult to come into the school
- parents with low self-confidence.

5. Action Plan

5.1 The involvement of parents in their own child's education in school and at home will be facilitated, encouraged and nurtured.

Action	ICS/ HGIOS Indicator	Responsibility
Information is readily available to parents on their children's progress, achievement and attainment. The school communicates its priorities to parents in plain language that takes account of each parent's background, circumstances, main language and residence, as well as when and in what format the information is most useful.	The child at the centre – self-evaluation in the early years & How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
The school demonstrates a range of ways of involving parents in the life of the school and of benefiting from their skills and knowledge.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
The school engages with all parents to support their child's learning and to become involved with the life of the school.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
The school takes account of the views of pupils, parents and staff on parental involvement.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
The school addresses ways to engage with parents who find it difficult to support their children's learning or become involved with the life of the school because of work, family, ethnic, and learning or disability barriers.	How good is our school 2.2, 4.1 & 5.7	Head teacher and staff team/ Family learning / CLD
The school will consider ways of increasing parental involvement in volunteering, supporting homework, contributing to curriculum and study support, including the promotion of family learning, adult learning opportunities will be explored.	How good is our school 2.2, 4.1 & 5.7	Head teacher Family Learning Team / CLD
Family learning team continue to develop links with school staff and the community learning partnership to expand provision of family learning courses for parents	ICS 2.2, 5.4, 7.2 How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Family Learning Team / Head teacher
Family learning continue to develop and offer parenting courses across all city schools	ICS 2.1, 2.2	Family Learning Team

5.2 We will actively develop opportunities for staff to help increase their expertise when engaging and supporting parents.

Action	ICS / HGIOS Indicator	Responsibility
Family learning will deliver training to teachers and volunteers to deliver parent courses. This will increase capacity to deliver more parent courses.	ICS 2.2, 7.2,	Family Learning Team / CPD Team
We will support teachers in promoting parental involvement by providing training to support teachers when working with parents.	ICS 3.1, 7.2	CPD team Family Learning Team / Business Partnerships
We will provide CPD opportunities for teachers to support active learning at home for parents.	ICS 3.1, 7.2	CPD Team

5.3 The information and advice we provide to parents about their child's education will be of a high standard.

Action	ICS / HGIOS Indicator	Responsible
Information and advice is given to parents will be in plain language about their child's progress, at times, and in a format that is helpful to parents.	The child at the centre – self-evaluation in the early years & How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
The school will report to parents at regular intervals about their child's progress.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher & Quality Improvement Officer
Emphasis is given to information and advice at times of transition, and at key stages of a child's life.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
The school handbook will have information which is available to parents about all aspects of the school life. Parents should be consulted about its content and relevance on annual basis.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher / Parent Council
The school handbook will be sampled for quality on an annual basis	ICS 6.4	Quality Improvement Officer at individual visits/ Parent Involvement Officer will sample annually city wide

5.4 Aberdeen schools will actively promote and support parent councils

Action	ICS / HGIOS Indicator	Responsibility
Parents are informed of their automatic membership of the school's Parent Forum and the importance of parent involvement and representation.	How good is our school 2.2 & 5.7	Head teacher
Head teacher will be supported and offered training on their role and responsibility in supporting their parent council.	ICS 7.2	Parent Council Support Worker
Parent Council members have access to training programmes that support their roles, responsibilities and needs.	ICS 7.2	Parent Council Support Worker
Audit of all parent council activity in schools- a sample of six schools annually	ICS 6.2, 6.4	Parent Council Support Worker

6. Useful Contact details

Family Information Service

FIS provides comprehensive, up to date information on all services for children, young people and families across Aberdeen city.

Telephone contact- 01224 764803 or text 07825 053136 www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/fis

The Parent Zone www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

This is a useful website that gives information for parents and carers different ideas of how to support their child in education.

The National Parent Forum of Scotland <http://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/npf>

Gives parent councils and parent an opportunity to discuss and raise educational issues or mutual interest or concern at a national level.

Enquire www.enquire.org.uk

The Scottish Advice Service for Additional Support for Learning

Parentline Scotland www.parentlinescotland.org.uk

ParentLine Scotland is the free, confidential, parent support helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small.

Telephone: 0808 800 2222

7.0 Editorial Group

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