

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	14 November 2017
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise of the review undertaken by the National Parent Forum for Scotland (NPFSS) to inform the Scottish Government and Education Scotland on the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the update report on the review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 by the National Parent Forum of Scotland be noted; and
- (2) that a report on the review of the Council's Parental Involvement Strategy "Making a Difference – Working Together to Support Children's Learning" be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee

3. Background

3.1. In November 2015, the Scottish Government announced that the National Parent Forum for Scotland would conduct a review into the impact of the Act and the surrounding policy framework.

3.2. The scope and purpose of the review centred on:

- ◆ *helping to support the aim of achieving excellence and equity*
- ◆ *looking at the impact of legislation and the wider policy framework on parental involvement*
- ◆ *reflecting on how policy and practice have evolved in the ten years since the Act became law*

3.3. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 required each local authority to facilitate the establishment of Parent Councils and to prepare a 'Strategy for Parental Involvement'.

3.4. The first step in taking forward the Act was to support parents in establishing, if they wished, a Parent Council for their school. At present in South Lanarkshire, there are 146 Parent Councils (100%) established in addition to other groups for parents such as Parent Teacher Associations.

- 3.5. The strategy also acknowledged the legal requirement, through the 2006 Act, for parents to be involved in the appointment process for Headteacher and senior posts in schools. It is worth noting that this was the practice in South Lanarkshire before it was enshrined in the Act.
- 3.6. The next step was to develop a strategy for parental involvement. A key aspect being the need for schools, teachers, and parents/carers to work together to support children's learning.
- 3.7. Evidence based research continues to show the importance of parental involvement. Parents, carers and families are the most important influence on children's attitudes, behaviour and achievement. The establishment of effective school partnership arrangements with parents/carers helps to support improvements in learning in a positive way.

4. The next steps

Revision of the Impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act)

- 4.1. The review by the NPFS set out to address the following questions:-
- ◆ what progress have schools and local authorities made in implementing the 2006 Act ?
 - ◆ how have the landscape, practice and approaches to parental involvement evolved since 2006 ?
 - ◆ how effective are Parent Councils ?
 - ◆ to what extent are parents informed by, and involved with, their school and engaged in their child's learning ?
- 4.2. A summary of some of the key findings under each of the questions is provided below:-
- 4.3. What progress have schools and local authorities made in implementing the 2006 Act?
- ◆ Over three-quarters (76%) of the parents who responded said they had been given the opportunity to be included in their child's education and 84% had been given help to get involved in the school community.
 - ◆ The majority of respondents considered that the increased focus on, and promotion of, learning at home had been a positive outcome of the Parental Involvement Act.
 - ◆ As well as the benefits, some responses highlighted limitations on learning at home.
- 4.4. How have the landscape, practice and approaches to parental involvement evolved since 2006?

Respondents identified several approaches relating to parental involvement that had worked well. The outcome of these approaches included:-

- ◆ Increased partnership working between parents and teachers
- ◆ A greater awareness of the importance of parental involvement within schools
- ◆ Awareness among parents of the work of the school and improved school evaluations.

Respondents also proposed a number of ideas for consideration in future policies and frameworks. Their suggestions included:-

- ◆ Promoting the link between parental involvement and improved learning outcomes including through the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan.
- ◆ Supporting and training teachers and Parent Councils to involve parents.
- ◆ Clarifying the roles and functions of the Parent Council.

4.5. How effective are Parent Councils?

Although parents appreciated the wide range of media used to communicate with them, there was a preference for direct methods.

Strengths of the Parent Council role

- ◆ Parents had a voice to express views
- ◆ Increased parental involvement
- ◆ Working relationships
- ◆ Recruitment of HT/DHT posts

Limitations of the Parent Council role

- ◆ Do not fully represent the parent forum
- ◆ Low level of uptake
- ◆ Varying levels of impact
- ◆ More to be done to encourage the involvement of ethnic minority parents

Financial and other support to parent councils was highlighted as a key finding.

4.6. To what extent are parents informed by and involved with their school and engaged in their child's learning?

Professionals who responded to this question identified the benefits and progress made in engaging members of the wider parent forum. This had created an 'open door' approach that parents had the right both to be heard and to get involved in their child's learning.

A range of proposals for consideration was highlighted:-

- ◆ Parents with English as an additional language
- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Primary vs secondary
- ◆ School trips / extracurricular activities
- ◆ Communications with parents
- ◆ Parental involvement and school improvement
- ◆ Valued support
- ◆ Digital technology

5. Key Messages

It is clear that the 2006 Act has helped to support a step-change in the way in which parents are recognised and supported to be involved in their child's education. Further work is required to support learning at home and a summary of the recommendations to be considered by local authorities is attached at Appendix 1.

- 5.1. In summary some key aspects were highlighted:-
- ◆ There is strong evidence that parental involvement helps to raise attainment and improve outcomes for children and young people and for schools.
 - ◆ Various positive outcomes of parental involvement can be a catalyst for change across social, educational and economic policy areas.
 - ◆ Parents, children and families are a common denominator in policies and agendas.
 - ◆ Integrating parental involvement into policies and strategies to raise attainment, ensure cross-departmental outcomes and narrow the gap between the lowest and highest achievers is key in driving this agenda forward.

6. The next steps – Review of the SLC Parental Involvement Strategy

- 6.1. A review of the report on the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 will be considered by a working group established to review the Council's Parental Involvement Strategy. The Parents as Partners Focus Group along with Parent Councils and Pupil Councils and other stakeholders will be involved in the review.
- 6.2. Following this review, a report on its findings will be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. None

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. To be met from within existing resources.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. There are no implications for sustainability in terms of the information contained within this report.
- 9.2. There are no risk implications arising from the proposals in this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. An equality impact assessment will be carried out during the revision of the Parental Involvement Strategy. The aim will be to ensure that the revised strategy does not have any adverse impact on part of the community covered by equalities legislation, or on community relations. The results will be published on the Council website when the strategy is finalised.
- 10.2. The revision of the strategy and statement of commitment will be subject to wide consultation and engagement with parents, schools, trade unions, elected members and other stakeholders.

Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources)

20 October 2017

Link(s) to Council Values/Objectives

- ◆ Raise Educational Attainment for All
- ◆ Increase involvement in Lifelong Learning
- ◆ Improve Lives of Vulnerable Children, Young People and Adults

Previous References

- ◆ Education Resources Committee – 2 February 2016

List of Background Papers

- ◆ The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act 2006)
- ◆ National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education
- ◆ How good is our School? (family learning)

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:- Des Dickson, Head of Education

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