

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee 20 January 2016

Agenda Item	18.
Report No	ECAS 14/16

Parental Engagement Strategy

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report sets out the revised strategic approach in providing a supportive framework in which parents can engage meaningfully in the education of children and young people and in the ethos and life of Highland Council schools.

1. Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's existing strategy was put in place to deliver the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. The strategy supported the setting up of parent councils in all Highland schools.
- 1.2 Parental involvement in Highland Schools has evolved significantly since the original strategy was put in place. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and the implementation of Journey to Excellence facilitated by Education Scotland have both contributed to a higher level of understanding of the importance placed on Parental Involvement.

2. Benefits of parental engagement

- 2.1 For children and young people:
 - It is easier for children and young people to learn when they get encouragement at home.
 - They will attain and achieve more when their parents are involved.
 - Children and young people get access to more activities in and out of settings when there are more adults to help.
 - Any concerns in the school environment can be addressed more easily when parents and schools work together.
 - They are happy when their parents are enjoying events in the setting.
- 2.2 For parents:
 - Their children do better when they are involved.
 - They are better supported to help and encourage their children's learning and development.
 - They have more information about their children's education.
 - Parents can support each other through peer mentoring which can have an impact on reducing isolation and build their confidence and skills.
 - Parents get reassurance that their children are receiving a good education.
- 2.3 For settings:
 - Parents bring skills which can enhance children's learning.
 - Parents contribute their time, so together parents and practitioners are able to do more activities with children and young people than practitioners can do on

their own.

- Children and young people's attainment and behaviour improve.
- Parents have ideas about how the setting can best support their children.
- Practitioners have people with whom they can talk over ideas and get help when developing plans for the setting.
- Parents can contribute to school improvement and an enhanced curriculum.

2.4 For the local authority:

- The local authority can draw on the ideas and experience of parents to influence future strategic developments.
- The local authority can benefit from feedback provided by parents on how effective its policies and education provisions are working in practice.
- The local authority can benefit from parental participation in implementing and reviewing local policies.

3 **The aims of parental engagement in Highland**

3.1 The aims of the revised strategy will be to:

- Raise awareness amongst parents and council officers of their roles as partners in the education of children and young people
- Highlight the need to build good relationships between parents and council officers by encouraging mutual trust, respect and realistic expectations
- Ensure communication between parents and the council 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 the council area.
- Encourage 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.
- Support parent councils to come together to develop a framework to allow them to formulate their views and to engage with council officers on key educational issues.

3.2 This strategy will enable Highland Council to continue 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 This strategy will also contribute towards the delivery of priority 42 in the council programme, improving pupil attainment by taking focused action in and beyond the classroom to help improve the performance of pupils, particularly those experiencing poverty and deprivation.

3.5 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.

4. Strategic direction

- 4.1 The Care and Learning Service is committed to refreshing and strengthening the engagement with parents, at the school and ASG level, and through a constructive working relationship with the newly formed Highland Parent Council Partnership, which brings Parent Councils together across the authority
- 4.2 This revised strategic direction will involve:
- Continuing to develop and support the current Parent Council model
 - Providing training and advice to parents who want to be involved in a Parent Council.
 - Consulting parents and their forums on key issues on an annual basis through the use of parent focus groups.
 - Involving parents in setting the education priorities in the delivery of 'For Highland's Children 4'.
 - Involving parents in the development of authority wide policies and procedures.
 - Investigating strategies for increasing parental involvement at school level
 - Exploring strategies for improving communication between parents and the authority and also between parents and parents across the council area.
 - Engaging with parents to ensure their involvement in supporting school close the attainment gap.
 - Helping represent parental views at a national level. e.g. The National Parental Forum
 - Producing an annual action plan which sets out the agreed joint workstream for the Highland Parent Council Partnership and the authority.
 - Supporting an annual conference which will review the parental engagement strategy, the action plan and report on council and national developments.

5. Implications

- 5.1 There are no new **resources, Gaelic, legal, climate change/carbon clever** or **risk** implications.
- 5.2 **Equalities:** It is important that the strategy encourages a broad range of parents to be involved in engaging with schools and the authority.
- 5.4 **Rural:** It is important that the strategy uses all means available to engage parents in all parts of the authority.

<h4>6 Recommendation</h4>

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| <p>6.1 Members are asked to note and support the development of the revised strategic approach.</p> |
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Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 11 January 2016

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