Education and Lifelong Learning

The Scottish Government

Overall Report for the Public Consultation on School Handbooks and Better Information for Parents: Results from the Online Consultation and Engagement Events and Focus Groups

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OVERALL REPORT FOR THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL HANDBOOKS AND BETTER INFORMATION FOR PARENTS:

RESULTS FROM THE ONLINE CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT EVENTS AND FOCUS GROUPS

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Table of Contents

1 KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

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The Purpose of the Handbook:
- To communicate the ethos of the school
- To help some parents choose a school
- A practical resource when preparing for school
- A useful reference tool when at school
- A place to signpost further information
- A way for the school to communicate with parents about the child's experience at school and to facilitate parental involvement in the child's learning and school life
- To facilitate communication between the school and parents

Information wanted in future
- Just over two-thirds of respondents in the online consultation wanted their school to provide them with information about their school only, just under a quarter wanted information about their schools and other schools in the council area, and only 8% wanted information about schools across Scotland.
- Parents and carers are largely happy with the information they currently receive from their school but provided suggestions for further improving it.
- School information is seen as being about much more than just statistics.
- Different parents require a different "cocktail" of information, signposting to other sources of information could meet this need

Choosing a school
- Ethos is the most frequently cited factor when choosing a school
- Some parents want performance information when choosing a school
  o Performance information could be presented more clearly, e.g. using graphics, trends are wanted rather than snapshots, and context is needed to explain statistics
- A wide range of information about policies and practicalities is required
- Parents who were choosing a school wanted local information to be more accessible and in one place

Preparing for school
- Parents require a wealth of information about the practicalities of preparing for school and advice on how to best to support their child to minimise anxiety and provide reassurance.

During school
- Information on school policies, school contact details and the curriculum came out as the top-priorities in the online consultation
- Performance information (linked to the school improvement plan) is needed to help parents understand what needs to improve and how they can support this
- The least priority was given to information on school budgets and school attendance rates

- Parents want information to help them understand their child's learning journey and how they can best support this.
- Information about Additional Support Needs has to be clear and should be integrated into the main school information.
- Parents of children with ASN want more opportunities to communicate with the school about their child's needs, to aid the school's understanding.
- Schools should sign-post further sources of support for parents of children with ASN

When information is wanted
- Information is wanted when it is relevant and in plenty of time for making decisions
- On-going, up-to-date, information is wanted, not just a once a year "snap-shot"

Accessing School Information
- Information needs to be available in a wide range of formats considering all equality issues to meet the needs of all parents
- Online is the favoured format for half of respondents to the online consultation, online seen as:
  o easier to up-date,
  o cheaper
  o more environmentally friendly
  There is an acknowledgement that hard copies are still required
- Face-to-face communication is highly valued

The role of Parents/Parent Councils
- Seen as important for parents and Parent Councils to be given opportunities to be involved in producing school information
- Parents want to be given a choice about how to get involved – there was most interest in reviewing and commenting on draft information
- Benefits of involving parents/Parent Councils were seen to include:
  o Ensuring information is relevant to parents
  o Ensuring information is "parent friendly"
- Suggestions that pupils could be involved too - to improve accessibility of information for parents and provide insights from a pupil's point of view.

The role of the Scottish Government/Local Authorities
- Seen to be a role for Scottish Government/Local Authorities in providing guidance on core information – especially statistical information.
- A national approach to school information would allow for consistency when comparing schools.
- However flexibility for schools to add their own information was also seen as very important, and guidelines shouldn't be too restrictive.

2   INTRODUCTION

2.1   This report presents the findings from the Scottish Government's Public Consultation on requirements for providing information for parents and carers about their child's school ("The school handbook"), which closed on 14 March 2011.

2.2   It draws together the findings from the separate strands of the consultation, which included an online written consultation, a series of engagement events and focus groups and a small number of interviews with head teachers and Local Authority Parental Involvement Officers. The full reports of results from the online consultation and the engagement events and focus groups to support the consultation are available on the Scottish Government website.

2.3   The public consultation ran for 4 months, from 15 November 2010 to 14 March 2011. The overall aim of the public consultation was to allow parents, and other key stakeholders to share their opinions on school information for parents with the Scottish Government. The main aim of the engagement events and focus groups was to allow parents and Parent Councils across the country to contribute their views on the Consultation in light of the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence across all schools in Scotland from August 2010.

2.4   Further details on policy background and methodology can be found in the "background" section at the end of the report.

3   THE RESULTS

The purpose of the school handbook

3.1   The school handbook is seen to serve a number of different purposes. The purposes outlined below reflect what respondents to the consultation[1] wanted to get from school handbooks. However in the online consultation there were suggestions that the purpose of the handbook needs to be clarified.

3.2   The school handbook is seen as an important way for a school to demonstrate its ethos, to show what is unique about it and to inform parents about what the school has to offer.

3.3   Choosing a school was discussed at events[2]. Not all parents actively choose a school for their children, and not all parents at events felt that they had had an opportunity to choose a school. However for those who participate in the process of choosing a school and opt to make a placing request, the school handbook can play a part in helping to inform this choice. Parents wanted a wide range of information in order to help them choose a school and make an informed decision. Whilst some parents want performance information, ethos

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[1] Unless otherwise stated, "respondent" refers to those who responded to the online consultation and those who attended engagement events or focus groups.
[2] Throughout the report "events" refers to engagement events and focus groups, unless otherwise stated.

was by far the most frequently cited factor in choosing a school. Practicalities and policy information were also wanted to help inform the decision. Parents also wanted to make comparisons with other schools in their local area.

3.4   Handbooks were also seen as useful practical resource when preparing for school and as a handy reference tool once children were attending school. Parents and carers at events spoke of the need for practical information to help them prepare their child for school (for example uniform and the timing of the school day) and also for reassurance. Providing practical information and clarifying expectations about the role of a parent in the handbook can provide reassurance and help to minimise parental anxiety.

3.5   Respondents at events wanted school handbooks to be a way of the school communicating with parents about their child's experience at school – both on a day-to-day school-life level (timing of the day, when lunch is, when gym is, the type of subjects being studied etc) and helping to explain the learning journey through the child's school life, explaining about curriculum and assessment and key transition stages, thus providing a route map of "ages and stages", and how parents can support their children's learning along the way.

3.6   The school handbook was seen as an important source of reference information. As different parents want access to different types of information at different times it was acknowledged that it would be good for the handbook to signpost sources of other more detailed information. This would provide access to the range of information required, without over-loading parents with too much information.

3.7   Another important purpose of the handbook was seen to be a way to facilitate communication between the school and parents/carers. Respondents commonly wanted their school to provide them with contact details. There were also suggestions that the handbook should include information that would make contacting the school easier, e.g. this could include if there is a best time to contact the school or photos of staff to help recognition.

Information wanted in future and when it is wanted

3.8   As part of the consultation respondents were asked about what information they would like from their school and also what level of information they would like their school to provide them with – whether they wanted information about their own school only, or information about other schools, either in their council area or across Scotland.

3.9   Results from the online consultation showed that just over two-thirds of respondents (68%) wanted their school to provide them with information about their school only, just under a quarter (24%) wanted information about their school and other schools in the council area and only 8% wanted information about their school and schools across Scotland. Respondents were primarily interested in their own school, there is some interest in being able to compare with other schools within the LA, but there is very little appetite for any national level comparisons.

3.10   The online consultation found that parents and carers were generally happy with the information that they currently receive from their schools - 95% of those who receive school information said that they found it useful or very useful. Suggestions for how this information could be further improved were given at the engagement events and focus groups and through the online consultation.

3.11   A theme which came across strongly in events and the online consultation is that school information is about much more than just statistics, and respondents wanted a range of information to provide a rounded picture.

3.12   A variety of different information is required at different stages in time. Respondents wanted access to a wide range of information, and each parent wants access to a different "cocktail" of information to meet their needs. Therefore a tension exists between providing the information required and avoiding information overload. It might not be appropriate for all such information to be included in the school handbook and respondents wanted schools to provide them with "core" information and signpost them to other information, such as the full content of policies, HMIE reports and statistics.

3.13   The section around information wanted in future has been structured around the following three themes: *choosing a school, preparing for school and during school*. However, it is acknowledged that there can be an overlap with some information being wanted during more than one of those periods, e.g. performance information might be required when choosing a school, and also be of interest whilst the child is at school.

Choosing a school

3.14   Not all parents actively choose a school, however those who do require a range of information to help them make their choice. Information about ethos, school policies and practicalities and performance information are wanted in order to inform their decision.

Ethos

3.15   School ethos was the most commonly mentioned factor at events that parents wanted to know about when choosing a school. They wanted to know about the school's aims and values, what opportunities it could offer their child and get a sense of whether they felt that their child would be happy there. Ethos was seen to describe what the school is all about, what it does differently, what it is proud of. [3]

Performance information

3.16   Performance information, such as statistics, and HMIE reports was wanted by some parents to help inform their decision. However it was mentioned that statistics, as currently presented, are not very clear or easily understood by

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[3] Ethos as a concept was explored at the events, and a more detailed description of what parents think ethos is can be found in the full report on engagement events and focus groups, which is available on the Scottish Government website.

parents. It was suggested that the use of graphics would improve the presentation of statistics. There was also a desire for trend information rather than snap-shots and an interest in the context to explain the statistics, and where necessary, school improvement plans showing how they plan to tackle weak areas. Performance information presented in this way is also wanted during school as well as when choosing a school. Once parents have chosen a school they are committed to it, and findings from events indicate that parents want performance information when their child is at school in order to understand their school's performance, how it is changing and what the school is doing to respond so that the parents can help with the improvements, either through providing more support to their child or supporting the school more.

Practicalities and Policies

3.17   Information about practicalities and policies can also play a part in choosing a school, with practicalities such as the number of children in a class, and policies around issues such as inclusion or religion influencing parental decisions.

3.18   When parents are choosing a school, they want to be able to make comparisons between schools, so require information about other schools. It might be helpful to have information about schools drawn together in one place to aid the comparison.

Preparing for school

Practicalities and reassurance

3.19   When preparing for school parents at events wanted adequate information about day-to-day practicalities and reassurance, this was especially true with their first child. Practicalities such as uniform and timings of the day were most commonly mentioned at events. In addition practical information in the form of a Frequently Asked Questions section was suggested.

3.20   In addition to practical information, which in itself could reduce anxiety, parents at events wanted reassurance from the school. This could include information which helped to clarify the role of parents, in a crisis, or in more day to day situations such what to do if your child is ill and can't go to school, or the best way to contact the school with a concern, or signposting to further sources of advice.

During school

3.21   A wide range of information is wanted during school.

Policies, Contact details and Curriculum

3.22   In the online consultation respondents were asked to select their top ten priorities for information they wanted from their school from a list of twenty types of information. They were also able to add their own suggestions for information they wanted from their school. Policies, school contact details

and the curriculum came out as the top three priorities (83%, 80% and 78% respectively). There was the least interest in information about school budgets and school attendance rates (11% and 7% respectively). Parents at events and respondents to the online consultation wanted to find out more about Curriculum for Excellence and how their school would be implementing it and to find out more about assessment and qualification procedures.

Table 1: Top 10 Responses to Q2b) in the online consultation

2 b) Thinking again about the information you would like your own school to provide you with – please indicate which <u>10</u> things you feel are <u>your top priorities</u>.		
Ranking	Alternatives	%
		base 674
1	Policies on issues like anti-bullying, discipline, equal opportunities, school uniform, homework, transport, school meals	83
2	School contact details	80
3	The curriculum – subjects your child will be doing and skills they'll be learning	78
4	Ways you can communicate with the school if you have a worry about your child or school	77
5	Assessment approaches – how the school assesses your child's progress and achievements	68
6	Reporting – how you will receive reports on your child's progress	67
7	Names and roles of staff	66
8	School values	63
9	Support for pupils – how to access additional support for learning, how the guidance system works	54
10	School performance – standards of achievement, learning and teaching	50

3.23 The most commonly mentioned types of "other" information respondents in the online consultation wanted included school calendars/timetables, both at the level of a calendar for the year highlighting key dates, such as holidays, parents evenings etc and timetable information about gym days, lunch times etc as well as suggestions of exemplar timetables for the different year groups and information about Parent Councils and how parents could get involved with the school.

3.24 At events, contact details was the most frequently cited piece of information that parents wanted. It was felt that there might be scope to improve the contact detail information currently received, for example by making sure the details were up-to-date and comprehensive. A few parents at events highlighted barriers to contacting the school, and wanted information to help combat this, e.g. photos of staff, or more information about how school communications work in practice.

Understanding the learner's journey

3.25 Parents want to be kept up-to-date with and understand the child's experience at school and their journey as a learner. Parents want to understand the pattern of the year, what their child will be doing and when. Parents want to know this so that they can help support their child's learning, and also plan ahead for things such as trips or meetings. A route map of ages and stages was suggested at some groups, to show how a child's school career progresses, what choices need to be made and when, and where these

choices might lead. Information about the subjects children are studying, what they are learning in school is wanted so that parents can help to support this learning at home.

Reference Information

3.26   Parents at events valued their handbooks as a source of reference information, which they could consult for information as and when they needed it.

Urgent Information

3.27   Schools had used a variety of methods to communicate urgent information with parents including: letters, radio announcements, texts, tweets, emails and phone calls. Urgent information included things such as health alerts (outbreaks), school closures and notice of their child's unauthorised absence. Texts were seen as appropriate for communicating urgent information and it was mentioned that twitter had successfully been used for school closure notifications.

Information relating to Additional Support Needs

3.28   Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide information around Additional Support Needs (ASN). Two of the focus groups held to support the consultation were with parents of children with ASN and a third focus group was for parents living in areas of high deprivation (with a significant proportion of children with ASN). Comments about ASN were also captured at engagement events and in the online consultation.

3.29   A theme coming out of the focus groups was that for parents of children with ASN "everything feels different". Parents wanted the opportunity to find out how to support their child's learning and development, but in addition to that, they also wanted more opportunities to be able to communicate with the school to help staff understand their child's needs and responses, so that the school could provide appropriate support. Parents of children with ASN strongly wanted information about ASN to be integrated with school information, rather than treated separately. It was felt that this was in line with integration policy and would help to give all parents a better understanding of some of the more common ASN issues.

3.30   Parents of children with ASN talked about the need for different forms of communication to compensate for their child's inability to tell their parents about their day, this could include, for example, notes or picture diaries. They might also require different or more detailed information around practical issues (e.g. is the school all on one floor, how is the playground supervised) and the routine of the day depending on their child's needs.

3.31   Parents at the focus groups felt that it was appropriate for schools to involve parents of children with ASN in producing the section on ASN.

3.32 Parents wanted a range of communications around support, its allocation and it's review.

3.33 Views about Additional Support Needs coming out of the online consultation indicated that it was very important for information about support to be clearly communicated to parents. E.g. "support" should be clearly defined, and it should be made clear whether this is one-to-one for particular pupil, or also available to the wider class.

3.34 It was also mentioned in the online consultation that schools should be aware that parents may need extra help and support whilst trying to get support for their child and therefore further sources of help and advice should be clearly signposted.

When information is wanted

3.35 Information is wanted when it is relevant, and it is seen as very important that information be regularly updated. Parents require different information at different stages and getting all the information at one point in time can lead to information overload.

3.36 It might be useful to structure information around the stages where it is likely to be required for choosing a school, preparing for school and during school, although there is some overlap with certain information likely to be wanted at more than one stage.

3.37 Parents want information provided in ample time to allow them to make relevant decisions, and preparations, this is true for issues such as subject choice when a child is at school as well as for the practical information required when preparing for school, and the variety of information required for choosing a school.

3.38 There is a desire for up-to-date information, parents want to receive a handbook every year not just the year their child starts school, or at the very least they want to be signposted to the updated information. At the moment parents often use their original handbook as reference tool, but are uncertain if all the information is still up-to-date. One of the reasons why online information is preferred is because it is seen as being easier to keep up-to-date.

3.39 There is also a desire for ongoing information, rather than just a once a year "snap-shot" via the handbook, and as such newsletters were suggested as a good way of keeping parents up to date.

Accessing School Information

3.40 School information needs to be available in a variety of formats and parents want to choose the format that best suits them. Online information was the preferred format for just over half of respondents to the online consultation.

Mixture of formats needed

3.41   There was a preference for receiving school information online, however there was also a strong acknowledgement that school information had to be available in a variety of formats to meet a variety of needs and equalities legislation, and that factors such as literacy level, English as a Second Language, or lack of access to the internet should not be barriers to receiving the information required from schools. It was suggested that parents be given a choice of formats, so that they could receive information in the way that best suited them.

Online information popular

3.42   In the online consultation respondents were asked how they would most like to receive information about their school. An online school handbook was the most popular response, with just over half (51%) of respondents wanting this, just over a quarter (28%) said that they wanted their own printed copy of the handbook. Comments received as part of the online consultation indicated that online was preferred because it was seen to be easier to up-date, cheaper and more environmentally-friendly than printing hard copies of information.

3.43   Parents at events felt that there should be more uniformity between school's websites, and that they should be required to reach a minimum standard. There was an expectation that where they were signposted to further information this would be found on the school website, making it the main source of information. However, there was widespread acknowledgement that a website is not a resource available to everyone in their home.

Making school information accessible and "parent-friendly"

3.44   The importance of information being available in a variety of formats to meet a variety of needs was also stressed. It was seen as important that hard copies of information be available for those who want them.

3.45   Suggestions for making information accessible to as many people as possible were provided. The use of CDs, podcasts and graphic novels were suggested for those for whom literacy levels are low. It was felt that, where required, information should be translated into other languages, Braille and British Sign Language. It was also seen as very important that information be "parent-friendly" and easy to understand. As such there were calls for the use of plain English, avoiding jargon, keeping information short and to the point and providing links to further information to avoid information overload.

Face-to-face communication

3.46   Face-to-face communication was highly valued by respondents to the consultation and attendees at events. It was seen as very important that the school was approachable if they had a concern about their child, and that they could have face-to-face communication with relevant staff at the school if required. Parents valued parents evenings, and more opportunities like this

were wanted. Some participants at events gave examples of good practice for face-to-face communication at their school, these included being able to informally meet primary school head teachers at the start of the day and knowing specific times that the head teacher would be available for meetings each week.

The role of Parents/Parent Councils

3.47　Findings from the online consultation and events indicated that it was seen to be very important for parents and Parent Councils to have the opportunity to be involved in creating and disseminating information.

3.48　In the online consultation, when asked about the level of flexibility or standardisation wanted in relation to information about how a school functions, just under a third (30%) of respondents wanted each school to decide, in consultation with parents/Parent Councils on all information to include. This response was as popular as the Scottish Government providing guidelines (31%) and more popular than the Local Authority deciding on a core set of information (25%). There was less of an appetite for consulting with parents in relation to school statistics with 14% of respondents wanting schools to decide on school statistics in consultation with parents.

3.49　The engagement events and focus groups explored the roles that parents and Parent Councils were willing to take on around creating and disseminating school information. The prevalent view was that there should be more opportunities for parental input. Parents wanted a choice about how they contributed to school information. It was strongly felt that Parent Councils should lead the process of parental involvement in school information.

3.50　The most popular way that parents wanted to be involved was through reviewing and commenting on drafts of information. However a range of levels of parental involvement were discussed, ranging from: at the most intense level, parents and Parent Councils leading in the generation of content (which a small number of parents were keen on), through to less intense ways such as commenting on drafts, or providing feedback on published information to improve it in future years.

3.51　There were certain areas where parents wanted to generate content themselves, such as information about the Parent Council itself, the experience of parents and specific information relating to a small number of parents, for example information around Additional Support Needs, where it was felt that parents of children with Additional Support Needs were best placed to provide this information.

3.52　The benefits of involving parents and Parent Councils in producing school information were seen to include: keeping the information fresh, ensuring that it was relevant to parents and covered the issues they are interested in, and making sure the information is parent-friendly – presented in a way that parents can understand, using plain English and avoiding jargon.

3.53 A role for pupil involvement was also mentioned, although less frequently than parental involvement. In the events there were seen to be two objectives for pupil involvement in information for parents, these were to improve the accessibility of the information and to provide better insights for parents and their children. As with parental involvement, a range of ways of pupils getting involved were discussed. At four engagement events it was suggested that pupils could review the handbook before publication, and at three events it was recommended that pupils insights were included.

The role of the Scottish Government/Local Authorities

3.54 Findings from the online consultation show that there is seen to be a role for the Scottish Government and Local Authorities in providing guidelines for school information, and that there is seen to be a greater need for Scottish Government guidelines in relation to school statistics than in relation to information on how a school functions. However it is also seen as important that schools have the flexibility to add their own information too. There were also comments that any legislation around school information should not be too restrictive and should allow for flexibility. Those involved in producing school handbooks called for the time and cost burden on schools to be kept to a minimum.

3.55 Over a half of respondents (53%) in the online consultation want the SG to provide guidelines in relation to school statistics, and just under a third (31%) for information on school policies.

3.56 Approximately a quarter of respondents want the Local Authority to decide on a core set of information, in relation to both school statistics and information about how the school functions.

3.57 It was commented that a national approach would allow for consistency, when comparing schools, however it was seen as being very important that schools were able to add their own additional information so that they could demonstrate what was unique about them.

3.58 There were also suggestions for central resources, at either Local Authority or Scottish Government level, to be used to lessen the burden of producing information for individual schools. These suggestions included a proposal for there to be two different handbooks, a LA or SG one which would contain high level policy and statistical information and one individual to the specific school which would focus on school level information. There was also a call for central resources to be used to translate school information into community languages and British Sign Language.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 School information, including school handbooks, is thought of as a valuable resource. The school handbook is seen to serve a variety of purposes: it communicates the ethos of the school, it helps parents to choose a school, prepare for school and is a reference tool whilst at school. It communicates with parents about the child's experience at school, and in doing so, can help

facilitate parental involvement in the school and help parents to support their children. it signposts further information and facilitates communication between the school and the parent.

4.2   School information is seen as being more than just statistics and respondents want a wide range of different types of information but did not want to be overloaded, so wanted schools to provide them with key information and signpost them to further information. A variety of information is needed to help parents choose a school, prepare for school and during school, information about ethos, performance, policies, contact details and the curriculum are all required. Information about Additional Support Needs (ASN) should be clearly communicated and be integrated with other school information. Parents of children with ASN would appreciate more opportunities to communicate with the school about their child's needs.

4.3   Respondents were most interested in information about their school, although there was some interest in comparing information with other schools in the Local Authority area. Information was wanted when it is relevant – all information does not need to be provided in one go, and information should be provided in adequate time for making decisions. Respondents wanted information to be regularly up-dated and there was interest in on-going information, rather than a once a year "snap-shot".

4.4   School information is required in a variety of formats to meet a variety of needs and should be presented in a way that makes it accessible to as many people as possible. There was support for information to be provided primarily online. Face-to-face communication is highly valued.

4.5   It is seen as important for parents and Parent Councils to have the opportunity to be involved in producing school information. Respondents wanted a choice of how to be involved. There were some suggestions that pupils could be involved too.

4.6   A role was seen for the SG or LA to provide guidance around core information, and this was more prevalent in relation to statistics, than in relation to how the school functions. However flexibility for schools to add their own information and demonstrate their uniqueness was viewed as very important.

4.7   In summary school information is valued and serves a number of purposes. Respondents want a wide variety of information presented in a variety of ways to best meet their needs. Information should be accessible and parent friendly. Sign-posting to further information is appreciated. Information is wanted when it is relevant and needs to be up-to-date. Respondents are most interested in their own school, but there is some interest in comparisons with other schools within the LA. Parents and Parent Councils want to get involved in producing information, but also see a role for the SG or LA in providing guidance, as long as this is combined with flexibility for schools to add their own information.

5 BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION

Policy Background

5.1   Under the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 1982 (the 1982 Regulations) Local Authorities have to provide certain information to parents and carers about their child's school (usually known as "the school handbook"). The Regulations cover a range of information such as transport facilities, school meal provision, post-school destinations, discipline and school rules, enforcement of attendance, specialist provision, examination achievement in National Qualifications and placing requests. Schools can supplement this information and choose how they present it (eg hard copy and/or electronic, different formats and styles).

5.2   Curriculum for Excellence has been introduced in Scotland to raise standards for all 3-18 year olds, wherever they learn. There are changes to what and how young people learn, including how they are assessed and qualifications. For these reasons, the Scottish Government consider that school handbooks need to be refreshed and updated to be more relevant and helpful for parents, and more consistent with the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence, as well as reflect the changes to the new National Qualifications.

Methods

5.3   In order to engage with stakeholders as widely as possible a number of methods were used. They consisted of an online written consultation, engagement events, focus groups and interviews with head teachers and Local Authority Parental Involvement Officers.

Online Consultation

5.4   The online written consultation ran for 4 months from 15 November 2010 to 14 March 2011. A total of *682* responses were received. The majority of respondents (84%) responded as individuals, whilst 16% responded on behalf of a group/organisation. The majority of respondents described themselves as parents/carers (70%), and a further 12% said they were responding on behalf of a Parent Council. 10% of responses came from head teachers, whilst only very low numbers of responses came from teachers (1%) and Local Authority employees (2%). Five percent of responses came from those who described themselves as "other". A range of groups were represented under "other".

5.5   The online consultation consisted of five key questions an space for final comments. The five questions revolved around the following themes:

- The current situation
- The type of information wanted in future
- The format of the information wanted

- The level of information wanted
- Who should decide what information you get

Engagement Events and Focus Groups

5.6   A consultancy company called Rocket Science was commissioned by the Scottish Government to design and facilitate a series of engagement events and focus groups to complement the online consultation.[4]

5.7   In total Rocket Science facilitated **eleven evening engagement events** for parents in locations across Scotland (one further event was facilitated by Learning Teaching Scotland in Shetland). Events were organised by the Scottish Government in partnership with Local Authorities and hosted by the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS).

5.8   Rocket Science also facilitated **five focus groups**. The objective of the focus groups was to gain the views of parents who may not have been strongly represented at the evening engagement events. Focus groups were targeted at parents of children with Additional Support Needs, Black and Minority Ethnic parents and parents living in areas of high deprivation.

5.9   In total there were **142 unique attendees** at the engagement events and focus groups (some attendees attended more than one event). The engagement events and focus groups were attended by: 65 parents, 45 Parent Council Representatives, 10 National Parent Forum of Scotland representatives, 10 school staff (Head Teacher, Depute Head Teacher or teachers), 10 relevant representatives from local authorities, and 2 others.

5.10   In the engagement events and focus groups the discussion was structured around three questions:

- What information do parents need – and when do they need it?
- In what format(s) and medium/media do they want this information?
- What role(s) do parents want to play in creating, reviewing and disseminating information?

Interviews with Head Teachers and Local Authority Parent Involvement Officers

5.11   In addition a small number of interviews with head teachers and Local Authority Parental Involvement officers were carried out and findings from these were included in the analysis of the online consultation.

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[4] Rocket Science wrote a full report on their findings from the engagement events and groups which is available on the Scottish Government website.

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