



Mansfield Traquair Centre
Mansfield Place
Edinburgh
EH3 6BB
Tel: 0131 474 8044
Email: admin@sptc.info
Web: www.sptc.info

How to encourage parents to engage with the Parent Council and school

Think about some of the challenges some parents face when trying to get involved:

- Time, work patterns
- Family life (caring responsibilities, money problems, relationship issues)
- Language and literacy
- Physical and mental health
- Lack of confidence
- Parents' opinion on their responsibility as a parent
- Their perceptions of their skill in maths, reading and writing and other subjects
- Their aspirations and expectations
- Reputation/history of the school
- Culture
- Their own experience of school
- Knowledge of the education system and how to be involved
- The experience of older children
- Geography
- Men can sometimes be reluctant to join a female dominated group

Practical ways to overcome these barriers

- Contact community groups and ask to speak at one of their meetings
- Make sure school staff are aware of the above challenges
- Ask parents to help with translation; could also ask pupils to help with this
- Organise social events, eg international evenings – “fun, family and food” are a good combination
- Collect contact details
- Make sure Parent Council and school communication is written in parent-friendly language
- Use social media to provide information to those parents who don't attend school/PC events
- Help to draft the school handbook – does it contain the information parents really want?
- Use surveys/questionnaires to find out what the barriers are
- Develop parent-friendly leaflets to explain various aspects of the school and learning
- Vary times of PC meetings
- Provide childcare at PC meetings
- Hold parent-friendly workshops on things like helping with homework, internet safety
- Ask different parents to write/suggest articles for a newsletter or Facebook page, eg about their own experience



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- Work with family-link/community learning workers to develop ways to work with parents
- Organise events aimed at dads, granddads, uncles, etc where they can play and learn with their children

Practical ways to make your Parent Council more attractive

- Be a visible presence and “showcase” the work of the Parent Council
- Improve methods of communication
- Think of other ways to include people in committee business, eg virtual membership, class representatives
- Form subcommittees
- Carry out an audit of skills within the school/wider community
- Target transition times and hold events for new parents
- Coffee shops/parents rooms: these could be set up as informal get-togethers at times when parents pick up/drop off children. It is an opportunity for parents to discuss all sorts of issues to do with parenting and school. May be used as a focus group for the Parent Council
- Get parents involved in small tasks.
- Produce a leaflet about your Parent Council using the SPTC leaflets *A user's guide to a Parent Council*
- Send out a survey to ask what parents know about/want from their Parent Council
- Ask to speak to parents at school events
- Ask pupils to tell their families about the Parent Council
- Chat to parents whenever and wherever possible
- Have a meet/greet person for guests and new committee members
- Make sure everyone knows who is on the Parent Council – display contact details and photos
- Display information about the Parent Council in community settings

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