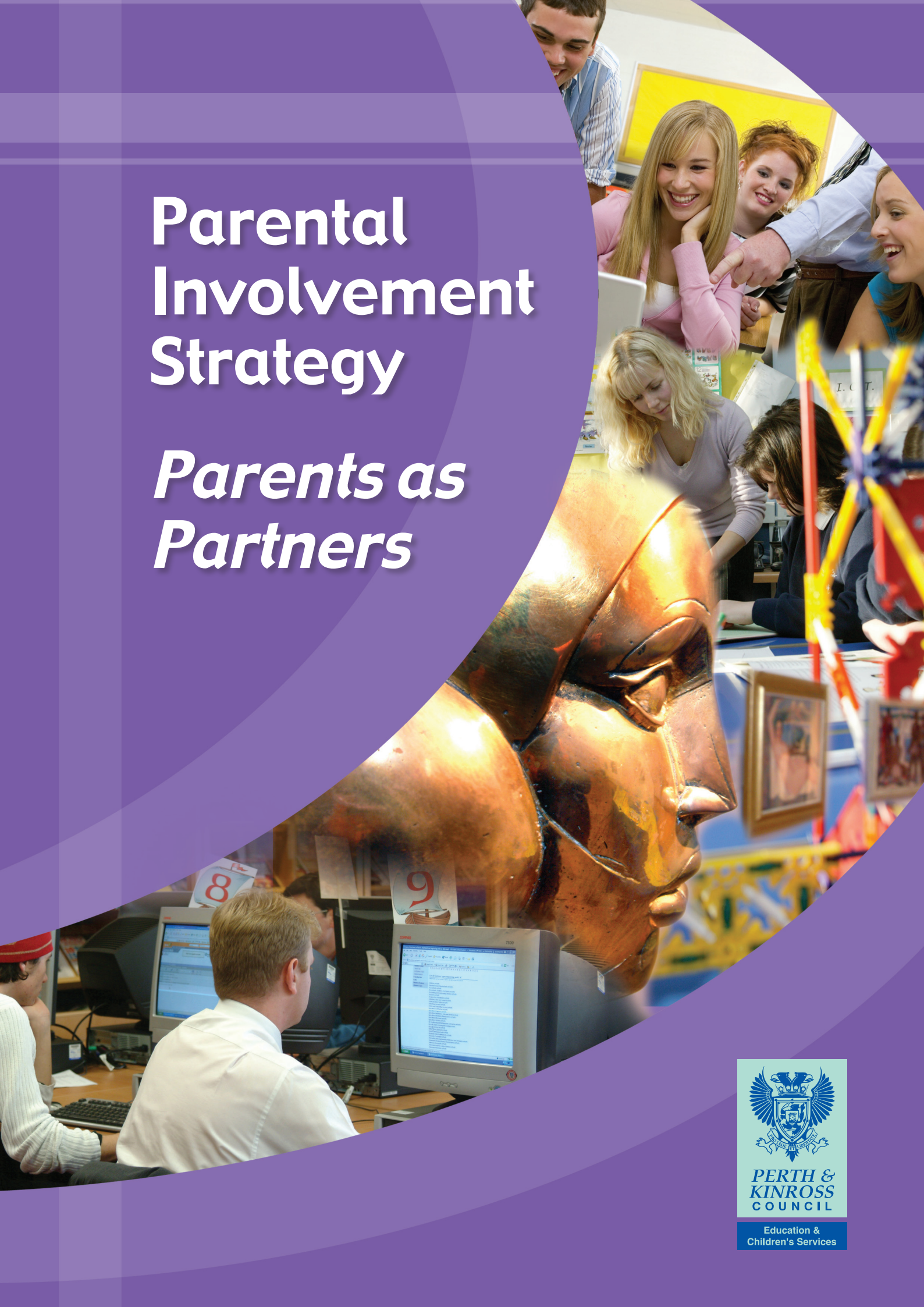


Parental Involvement Strategy

Parents as Partners



**PERTH &
KINROSS
COUNCIL**

Education &
Children's Services

Background

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act) 2006 lays down the legislative requirements for the establishment of Parent Councils. The guidance that accompanies the Act makes it clear that the intention is to support parental involvement in a much wider sense, not only the representation of parents, but the building of home/school partnerships and the involvement of parents supporting their child's learning at home.

There are three main levels of engagement described in the Act:

- ❑ *Learning at Home*
- ❑ *Home/School Partnership*
- ❑ *Parental Representation*

A Parental Involvement Strategy Group made up of parents, school staff and Education & Children's Services with additional involvement from young people and representatives from voluntary agencies worked together to develop a strategy to support and improve parental involvement in Perth and Kinross.

This Parental Involvement Strategy contributes to the vision of *"a confident and ambitious Perth and Kinross with a strong identity and clear priorities that everyone works together to achieve. Our communities will be vibrant and successful; safe, secure, healthy and sustainable environments; places where people are nurtured and supported."* (Statement of Intent, Perth & Kinross Council March 2007).

It links to the Communication and Consultation Policy which is part of the Perth & Kinross Council Education & Children's Services Policy Framework.

Parents are already involved in education through other key policies and plans. These include:

- ❑ *Perth and Kinross Business Management & Improvement Plan*
- ❑ *Creating a Curriculum for Excellence Parts 1-5*
- ❑ *How good is our school? - HMle*
- ❑ *The Child at the Centre - HMle*
- ❑ *The Journey to Excellence - HMle*
- ❑ *Getting it Right for Every Child*

In addition, the strategy also complements the Parenting Strategy for Perth and Kinross (2008-12), which outlines support for parenting provided by the Council, the NHS and Voluntary Agencies (www.pkc.gov.uk).

A parent leaflet summarising this strategy, 'Parents as Partners' has been produced for all parents.

NB: *The term parent used throughout this document applies equally to parents, carers and family members who care for children.*

Looked After Children (LAC) is the term given to the statutory duties and responsibilities placed on local authorities in respect to children and young people either in their care or placed on supervision by the Children's Hearing System.

A looked after young person or child is any child for whom the local authority has legal responsibility. The local authority is the corporate "parent."

The Looked After Children Strategy document features on Perth & Kinross Council's Website.

1. Strategic Aims

The way to better parental involvement lies through increased engagement with parents and their families. This strategy has been produced in order to provide a supportive framework in which all parents can engage meaningfully in the education of their child and in the wider life of the school.

The aims of this strategy are that:

- all parents and staff are partners in the education process and are aware of the complementary roles they perform;*
- building relationships and creating mutual trust and respect between parents and staff is given high priority;*
- communication between home and school is effective;*
- potential opportunities and difficulties are identified early;*
- groups such as Parent Councils and Parent Teacher Associations are fully supported to play a valuable role in building good relationships between and among parents, schools, Education & Children's Services and the wider local community;*
- parental understanding of the education their child is receiving is increased;*
- clear channels of communication are established so that schools and parents can respond quickly to emerging issues and concerns.*

2. Promoting Parental Involvement

We know from national research that children do better at school, and achieve more in life when parents and schools work together. Only 15% of a child's life is spent at school and so it is very clear that parents have the most influential role in a child's education. It is important that we respect that each of us has our own

role to play, but in working together we will aim to ensure that every child does the best they can at school and beyond.

All Scottish schools have placed “*Curriculum for Excellence*” at the heart of the work they are doing. It endorses our view that all of our children and young people can succeed and that all partners in the learning process - pupils, parents and teachers - must continually search for ways to fully involve each learner in Perth and Kinross.

Curriculum for Excellence plays a significant role to “*help prepare young people to take their place in a modern society and economy. It will provide a framework for all young people in Scotland to gain the knowledge and skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that they need.*”

*Building the Curriculum 3, A Framework for Learning and Teaching
Scottish Government, 2008*

The broad purposes of education are defined in Curriculum for Excellence. These are to develop the attributes and capabilities in all children and young people enabling them to become:

- ❑ *Successful learners*
- ❑ *Confident individuals*
- ❑ *Responsible citizens*
- ❑ *Effective contributors*

This strategy supports all four Capacities of ‘Curriculum for Excellence’.

3. The Three Levels of Engagement

The three levels of engagement of the Parental Involvement Act 2006 are:

- ❑ *Learning at Home*
- ❑ *Home/School Partnership*
- ❑ *Parental Representation*

Supporting Learning at Home

We recognise the vital role that parents and carers play in their child’s learning and development. Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their child and can expect to receive information on what their child is learning at school and how they can be best supported. Effective communication and a sense of shared responsibility are the key to getting this right.

Across Perth and Kinross we have excellent examples of how our schools work with parents to help them support and extend their child’s learning, providing

materials such as homework and study guides. We want this level of support to be available to all parents.

Examples of how we can support parents to help their child's learning are:

- ❑ *providing guides on how children learn at nursery, primary and secondary schools - with information on activities parents can do at home to support their child's development;*
- ❑ *giving parents advice and support on how pupils can study, revise and prepare for exams;*
- ❑ *exploring ways to hold 'study' and homework sessions for parents;*
- ❑ *Headteachers, with other Education & Children's Services staff, working together to support parents who are unsure of procedures and next steps;*
- ❑ *developing a policy on homework that will give parents, pupils and staff a shared understanding of what is required - regular homework is the equivalent of an extra year's schooling, a real benefit when it comes to national examinations;*
- ❑ *providing continuing information on new developments in education such as Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Assessment is for Learning (AifL).*

Removing Barriers

There is a variety of reasons why some parents have little or limited contact with a school. This can create barriers that stop them getting involved or supporting their child's education and learning. Barriers may include previous personal experience; additional support needs; the isolation of lone parents; shift (or long) working hours; lack of child care facilities and language differences.

In addition, we shall recognise and respect the various cultural, faith, ethnic and lifestyle choices within our communities, developing practical ways to support parents and pupils.

Examples of the way we can work together to tackle the issues which stop parents being involved are:

- ❑ *being flexible in the timing of events to discuss a child's progress with parents;*
- ❑ *the Headteacher, together with staff from across Education & Children's Services working together to support parents who find it difficult to become involved;*
- ❑ *accessing translation and interpretation services;*
- ❑ *supporting learning for **all** children;*

- ❑ *making support available to parents who choose to educate their child at home;*
- ❑ *making it easy for parents to find out about adult learning opportunities, parenting skills and community involvement;*
- ❑ *supporting the parents of Looked After Children to play their part in parental involvement;*
- ❑ *encouraging parents who find it difficult to come to school on their own to bring a friend, relative or partner with them.*

4. Supporting Home/School Partnerships

Effective home/school partnerships are essential to ensure that children get the most out of their school and their education. Working co-operatively will allow potential difficulties and opportunities to be identified and addressed at an early stage.

Schools and Education & Children's Services should create opportunities for parents to be more involved in their child's learning and education and to develop communications to improve the information schools provide to parents.

Examples of the ways we can work together include:

- ❑ *issuing regular newsletters with holiday dates, information on school trips and events and for secondary schools, exam dates and best sources for revision advice;*
- ❑ *offering a range of opportunities for parents to participate in school life - from one off assistance to regular activities;*
- ❑ *developing a clear policy on how parents and wider family members can participate in the life of a school;*
- ❑ *establishing formal and informal times when parents and teachers can meet to discuss;*
- ❑ *demonstrating a commitment to share ideas and information - and so build trust;*
- ❑ *arranging 'fun social events' that create opportunities for building relationships with parents and the wider community - which can, at the same time, raise funds for the school;*
- ❑ *organising and developing training opportunities for staff and parents to develop communication about the curriculum and supporting children's learning at home and in school;*
- ❑ *consulting parents on School Improvement Plans;*
- ❑ *ensuring that Education & Children's Services and School Improvement Plans include proposals to improve parents' involvement in their child's learning.*

Giving Advice and Information to Parents

The type of advice and information required by parents about their child will vary but all communication must be honest and respect the privacy of other children and staff. All opportunities should be taken to work towards a two-way exchange of information, trust, openness and achieving the best for every child - by parents and staff.

Examples of how and when we can provide support and advice are:

- ❑ *at key transition stages such as starting nursery, primary or secondary school and also on moving schools;*
- ❑ *when Additional Support Needs including Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) have been identified;*
- ❑ *when parents and/or school have attendance concerns;*
- ❑ *if support and advice from external agencies would benefit a child or family.*

5. Parental Representation

This strategy provides a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on matters affecting the education of their child.

All parents who have a child attending a school are automatically members of the Parent Forum for that school. This allows parents to have their collective views represented by their elected Parent Council members.

One of the key roles of Parent Councils is to represent the views of parents to the school and to the authority. They have a duty to ensure that the views they give us are truly representative. We will ask for views in a number of different ways to give parents and pupils a say on school and on authority issues and the decisions we make.

Examples of how we can continue to encourage and support Parent Councils include:

- ❑ *providing specific help to establish new Parent Councils;*
- ❑ *training for Parent Council members to enable them to fulfill their role;*
- ❑ *funding for Parent Councils will comprise three elements:*
 - *a budget for administration expenses, based on the size of the school roll and whether it is a primary or secondary school;*
 - *payment of a public liability insurance premium for each Parent Council;*
 - *making a small tax free payment (called an honorarium) for the clerk to the Parent Council;*

- ❑ *consulting with parents in various ways on school and authority issues.*

Examples of the different bodies involved in consultations are:

- ❑ **Parent Forums** - every parent who has a child at a school is automatically a member of the parent forum for that school. Depending upon the subject matter we may at times invite the views of **all members of a parent forum**.
- ❑ **Parent Councils** - we will normally seek your views through your school's Parent Council. Examples of how we can see the views of the Parent Forum and pupil body are:
 - *talking to parents*
 - *sending out questionnaires or surveys to establish parental and pupil views*
 - *attending parents' evenings or events and asking parents for their views*
 - *considering the views of School Pupil Councils*
- ❑ **Chairpersons' Group** - all Chairpersons of Parent Councils are invited to attend at least two meetings a year with the Head of Education Services and members of the Senior Management Team, Education & Children's Services. Other meetings will be arranged to discuss specific topics, such as consultation issues.
- ❑ **Focus Group** - a cross-sector representational group of Parent Council members will meet in a consultative role with the Head of Education Services and Senior Managers in Education & Children's Services at least twice a year.

6. Recruitment and Appointment of Senior Staff

The views of parents are sought as part of this process.

The principles of the recruitment and appointment process are:

- ❑ *to enable parental involvement through Parent Councils at key stages in the recruitment process including short listing of candidates and the interview process;*
- ❑ *training will be provided to enable parents to participate in the process with confidence and make informed choices.*

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Parental Involvement Strategy reflects the Council's commitment to work in partnership with parents to promote their involvement supporting their child's learning and in the life of the school. The ultimate success is that children are both happy at school and achieving their full potential. Evaluation of this strategy's effectiveness will be undertaken in a variety of ways.

Ways in which we can monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our partnership with parents include:

- ❑ *every school will evaluate the success of its partnership with parents using quality indicators from "How good is our school?" and "The Child at the Centre", as a basis for its self evaluation;*
- ❑ *Perth & Kinross Council will monitor and evaluate the school's success in continuing to develop partnership with parents;*
- ❑ *when a school is having an HMIE Inspection or an Extended Learning and Achievement Visit, parents' views are sought through questionnaires and focus group meetings;*
- ❑ *Perth & Kinross Council will review this strategy, in partnership with key stakeholders, within three years of implementation.*

8. Providing an Effective Complaints System

The Authority aims to deliver services to the highest quality. Feedback is valued and helps to improve the quality of the service provided.

The Authority has an established process for dealing with parental concerns and complaints. This complaints procedure comprises of clear definitions and advice should a complaint be made or received. This can be accessed by all on the Perth & Kinross Council website www.pkc.gov.uk and leaflets are available at any Council establishment.

This strategy sets out the policy to support effective parental involvement in Perth & Kinross Council schools. It takes account of the guidance detailed in The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act 2006), Scottish Executive 2006.

For further information please contact the Operations Manager on 01738 476200 or at ECSGeneralEnquiries@pkc.gov.uk

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Communications Manager on 01738 476873

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