



## What is a PTA/PA?

Parent Councils are now well established in Scottish schools but this has led to some confusion about where that leaves the role of the PTA/PA. One of the main aims of the Parental Involvement legislation (which introduced Parent Councils) was to allow parents to decide what was best for them and their school and it has resulted in many different models of parents groups in schools across the country.

Different models include:

1. The Parent Council is the only parent group and amongst other things organises social and fundraising events.
2. The PTA/PA acts as a sub-committee of the Parent Council and reports to the PC as and when necessary.
3. The PTA/PA remains as an independent group, organising activities and taking decisions and reports to the parents and/or teachers.

### 1. The Parent Council as the only group

Information about the role and responsibility of a Parent Council can be found in our leaflet *What is a Parent Council?*

### 2. The PTA/PA as a subcommittee of the Parent Council

If the existing PTA/PA wishes to become a subcommittee then they must formally disband. All the parent/teacher members must be informed about this proposal and should be invited to a meeting with at least two weeks' notice given. The meeting can take place before a Parent Council meeting but the proposal must be presented formally and seconded, and this should be minuted. The subcommittee may continue to be called the PTA/PA.

It is up to the Parent Council to decide – in consultation with the subcommittee – what their duties will be; whether they should have a separate bank account; and how they should liaise with the Parent Council.

If the Parent Council has Connect Ordinary Membership, then the PTA will be covered by their membership-linked insurance; however it is important that the Parent Council is aware of the subcommittee's activities so, if a claim is made there is a clear paper trail of any decisions and/or actions.

More information can be found in our leaflet *Subcommittees – your questions answered.*

### 3. The PTA/PA as an independent group

There is no required, legally correct model for an independent PTA/PA. The parents and teachers at a school are free to decide both on their constitution and on what they want to do.

The constitution should describe the organisation that the parents want to have and we have leaflets advising parents of the main things it should cover i.e.

- Aims of the organisation
- Membership
- How the committee is selected
- How the office bearers are appointed
- Voting procedures
- The need for an annual check of the accounts, agm, etc

It may be that the PTA takes the role of social and fundraising committee, however there is nothing to stop them engaging in other activities. The PTA/PA is a partnership between parents and members of staff to support all in the school community. Its activities may include:

- Raising funds for non-curricular ventures, for example, school clubs, trips, pupil/parent common room, displays, etc
- Organising social events
- Informing parents of new initiatives in education and about common concerns
- Organising educational events to meet staff and learn about teaching methods
- Acting as an informal channel of communication between parents and staff and the Parent Council.

There are no clear boundaries between what a PTA can do and what a Parent Council can do. It is for the PC and PTA/PA to agree how they will work together.

In some schools parents groups have come to an agreement that whichever group raises an issue first will see it through. For example, the PTA/PA organises clubs, social and curriculum events, whilst the Parent Council deals with funding, the school improvement plan and issues like health and safety. There is no right or wrong way and PTAs are certainly not restricted in their activities because of the presence of a Parent Council.

One of the main differences between the Parent Council and a PTA/PA is that a headteacher has a right and a duty to attend Parent Council meetings; this is not the case with PTAs. If a school has both a PC and a PTA, then it may be difficult for the headteacher to attend both meetings. If this is the case, then the PTA could liaise with other members of staff.

It is very important that an independent PTA/PA has their own public liability insurance as the committee members are **personally liable** for incidents that happen as a result of their negligence and/or decisions. Of course, PTAs can join Connect to access membership-linked insurance.

## Other leaflets available

1. Subcommittees – your questions answered
2. What is a Parent Council?
3. Constitutions Made Easy
4. A Model Constitution
5. Guidelines for Chairperson; Treasurer; Secretary; Committee Members

## We would like to know

Did you use this leaflet? Did you find it helpful? Please give us your comments.

## About Connect

You may be interested to know that we offer our members a range of benefits including our membership-linked insurance. Other benefits include:

- Free Information & Training Sessions
- Access to online meetings and surgeries
- Our Backchat newsletter and E-Updates
- Access to the member's-only section on the Connect website
- Regional Events and Annual Lecture
- Telephone and email helpline
- A wide variety of leaflets and other resources

**You are welcome to use information from this leaflet however, if you do we ask that you acknowledge Connect.**

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