

# Parents as partners

Strategy for parental involvement



## Making a difference

Working together to support  
children's learning

April 2009

Policy  
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SOUTH  
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For the purpose of this document :-

- *The term 'school' will be used to describe all educational establishments;*
- *Parents will be taken to mean all parents and carers including those with responsibility for looked after children.*

## What do we mean by 'Parents as Partners'?

Here are a few quotations that help to show the impact that parents and the home have on children's learning.



A good school is one which keeps in contact with parents, keeps parents informed. There is a lot of communication about learning and the curriculum.



Research carried out by Sacher in 2002 stated:

- the younger the child, the greater impact parents have on their child's achievements;
- at age 7, parents have 5 times more influence than that of the school;
- at age 11, influence is more even between parents and school;
- at age 16, balance swings significantly towards school.



Parents are keen to:-

- support their child's learning;
- support home learning – but want to know what they can do; and
- find the time – to become involved.



# Strategy for parental involvement

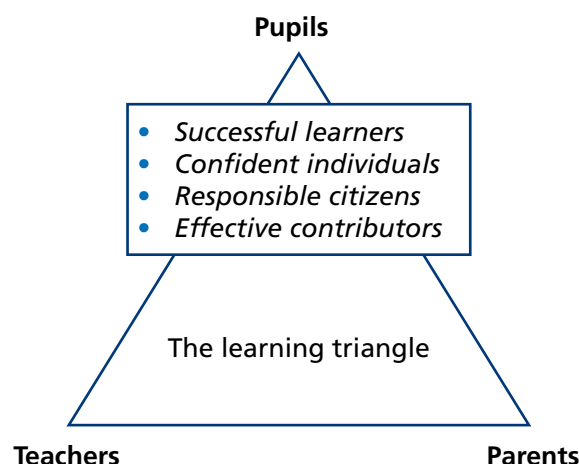
## Introduction

The Parental Involvement Act requires each local authority to prepare a document to be known as the "Strategy for Parental Involvement."

In South Lanarkshire we recognise the important role that many parents play in the education of their children. The support of parents can and will continue to contribute significantly to the work of our schools and establishments. The Council Plan "**Connect**" reaffirms this through its reference to partnership working; raising attainment for all; and its commitment to improving the lives of children and young people.

The Strategy for Parental Involvement has been developed to improve both the quality and extent of parents' involvement in their child's learning. Parents, carers and families are the most important influence on children's attitudes, behaviour and achievement and effective parental involvement will support learning within school.

Working together we can make a difference. The learning triangle is carefully balanced with three equal components – pupils, teachers and parents. There is no doubt that when these components work effectively together educational, social and behavioural standards are raised and outcomes improved.



The challenge is to ensure that all three sides of the triangle are connected and that parents, teachers and pupils work together to achieve the best possible outcomes.

A key element in engaging parents in the education of their child and the life of the school is effective communication; we recognise that the benefits build up over time and involve different methods. Effective communication with parents can only be achieved if schools open their doors to parents and create a positive and welcoming environment – this requires a whole school approach.

The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence offers a great opportunity for teachers, pupils and parents to work together and help everyone become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It is an exciting time for everyone connected with education in South Lanarkshire. We would encourage everyone to use this strategy to help deliver the best possible learning experience for children and young people.

Councillor Mary Smith  
Chair of Education Resources Committee

Larry Forde  
Executive Director  
(Education Resources)



## 1. Purpose of the strategy

This strategy has been produced in order to provide a supportive and consistent framework in which establishments and services can engage parents/carers and families meaningfully in the education of their children, and in the wider life of the school. Through our Strategy for Parental Involvement we wish to develop further, effective partnership arrangements between the Council, establishments, parents and carers and those involved in supporting children and their families.

## 2. Principles which underpin the strategy

The strategy aims to give as many parents as possible the opportunity to become more involved in supporting their child's education in partnership with Education Resources in South Lanarkshire.

Our objectives for parents/carers and families are that they should be:-

- *welcomed and given an opportunity to be involved in the life of the school;*
- *fully informed about their child's education and learning;*
- *encouraged to make an active contribution to their child's learning;*
- *aware of their responsibility for the education and welfare of their child;*
- *able to support learning at home;*
- *aware of the aims and ambitions of the school;*
- *know how and where to raise concerns;*
- *supported if they wish to form a Parent Council;*
- *encouraged to work in partnership with their child's educational establishment.*

## 3. Origin of the strategy for parental involvement

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires each education authority to promote and encourage the involvement of parents in their child's education. It states that through the preparation of a document, to be known as the "strategy for parental involvement", education authorities should share with parents their vision of how this will be achieved.

Whilst the Act lays down the legislative requirements for parental representation through the establishment of Parent Councils it also makes it clear that the intention is to encourage wider parental involvement by:

- *encouraging and enabling parents to support their child's learning at home through the provision of information and guidance;*
- *building on links between the school and home which are aimed at improving children's learning and attainment.*

When parents and other family members are effectively involved in their children's education the outcome for their children is better. The strategy provides an opportunity to set out how Education Resources can engage more effectively with parents and families and show how working together we can make a difference to children's learning, attainment and achievement.

# Strategy for parental involvement

We recognise that:

- *meaningful parental involvement can only take place when there is a climate of mutual trust and understanding of each other's roles;*
- *parents/carers, families, pupils and staff, are partners in the education process, each with a distinctive role to play;*
- *parental involvement should be inclusive, and participation by all parents/carers and families including those with a responsibility for looked after children should be encouraged;*
- *parents should be encouraged to express their views and take part in decision making and that the Parent Council has a valuable role to play in partnership with the school in helping to achieve this;*
- *volunteers and other parent groups like the PTA contribute significantly to the work of our schools and establishments.*

## Outcome

Increased participation will lead to a better understanding of:

- *family and community issues*
- *how best to meet the needs of children, parents, and the wider school community*
- *how parents can support their children's learning*
- *how to further develop home school links and improve communications*

## 4. Who should implement the strategy?

Within Education Resources and establishments there is recognition that promoting the involvement and engagement of parents/carers in children's learning, does impact on the attitude, behaviour and achievement of young people. Our aim is for everyone to work together to help deliver the best possible learning experience for children and young people. This is reflected in the Education Resources' Annual Plan and in school improvement plans.

- *The Executive Director (Education Resources) and Heads of Education are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy.*
- *Heads of establishments and their staff and others who support children and families are responsible for putting the strategy into practice.*
- *All parents and carers (of nursery, primary, secondary pupils) are key partners in this process and are invited to work within the spirit of the strategy.*
- *Different arrangements for securing effective parental involvement may be appropriate in individual schools. However, these arrangements should be closely aligned to the principles of the strategy and linked to the school's improvement plan which is shared with parents, carers and pupils.*



## 5. Roles and responsibilities

The Executive Director (Education Resources) will ensure that each head of establishment is supported to enable the implementation of the above principles within an effective and meaningful school statement on parental involvement, in accordance with the terms of this strategy.

The Executive Director (Education Resources), Heads of Education and schools will be responsive to issues raised by parents and carers and should ensure that parents' rights and responsibilities inform educational planning and delivery across the Council as a whole.

Heads of establishment should ensure that effective and meaningful parental involvement takes place and that guidelines are developed to show how this will occur - taking into account the views of parents and carers in their respective schools.

Heads of establishment should ensure that their school has in place effective arrangements to encourage parental partnerships in accordance with the terms of this strategy. Home school partnership, community learning and development, family learning, other services, partner agencies eg NHS and voluntary sector groups have a key role to play in reaching out to and supporting parents/carers and establishments in developing better home-school links.

Education Resources, through its Quality Improvement Team, will offer appropriate support and challenge to heads of establishment to ensure the principles of the strategy in terms of engagement with parents are translated into positive actions.

Parents/carers are encouraged to share in the responsibility to support his/her child's education and to endeavour to work in partnership with his/her child's school to do that (e.g. through attendance and participation at parent events, encouraging attendance, supporting and celebrating achievement, providing a climate of learning at home).

Parent Councils and sub-groups should ensure there is effective dialogue between school staff, the whole parent body (the Parent Forum) and wider school community.

# Strategy for parental involvement

## 6. Working together - effective communication (Linked to the Education Resources' Policy Statement on Communication and Consultation)

- 6.1 The Council through Education Resources will take the lead in promoting the message that the strategy has been co-developed by the local authority, schools, parents/carers and is co-owned and implemented by all.
- 6.2 Effective partnership working is enhanced by clear communication channels with parents, carers and other groups or organisations that work with or provide services directly or indirectly to children, young people and families.
- 6.3 A key element in engaging parents in the education of their child and the life of the school is effective communication. For example:
  - *Schools should create an ethos and atmosphere in which parents and carers feel able to discuss comfortably any aspect of their child's progress with staff.*
  - *Communications should be clear and provide accurate information about each individual child's progress.*
  - *Arrangements should be made to share information on pupils with parents who cannot attend the formal arrangements. Consideration should be given to how best to liaise with parents/carers, who may, for whatever reason, have disengaged from the educational process.*
  - *Informal opportunities for teachers to talk and share information with parents/carers on any aspects or concerns relating to individual children should be encouraged.*
  - *Events that involve children their parents/carers and families coming together should be encouraged and used to celebrate and showcase the achievements of children.*
  - *Formal reporting arrangements such as information evenings or parents' evenings should continue to provide opportunities for dialogue between parents and teachers and schools should take opportunities to engage with parents, whenever possible.*





6.4 Parents/carers will also receive information through a number of different channels and mechanisms such as:-

- *newsletters*
- *school handbook*
- *the school and Council website*
- *telephone communication*
- *email/text messages*
- *letters/correspondence*

Parents/carers are invited to inform their child's school about changes to their family circumstances including emergency contact points.

6.5 Two-way communication between Education Resources and parents about school and authority matters.

Education Resources will seek views in a number of different ways to give parents and young people a voice on authority issues. This will normally be done through:-

- *established representative groups such as the Parent Council, Parent Forum, PTA, Pupil Council, Youth Council;*
- *information meetings and focus groups to discuss specific issues/topics;*
- *learning community events that will provide a forum for parents to come together and share ideas;*
- *an annual conference for parents to share information and views on national and local priorities for education; and*
- *evaluations at events and by asking parents and young people to give their views.*

Communication between and with staff, parents/carers must be polite non-threatening and take place in an environment that is non-confrontational and respects the rights of all concerned.

# Strategy for parental involvement

## 7. Parental partnerships

South Lanarkshire Council is committed to supporting Parent Councils in carrying out their role in supporting the school in its work with children, representing the views of parents and promoting engagement with the school, parents, providers of nursery education and the local community. This includes the allocation of a budget to each Parent Council.

Education Resources will encourage and support Parent Councils to communicate with the Parent Forum on their activities and achievements over the past year and their priorities for the coming year through their annual plan.

- *Opportunities will be offered for parents to meet in a learning community setting to share ideas and practice.*
- *An annual conference for parents will be held to enable Education Resources and parents to assess how the strategy is being put into practice and to share ideas and good practice.*
- *Training opportunities based on the needs of parents will be provided.*

*All communications should be written in plain English without use of jargon – this will take into account layout, presentation and appropriate language. Communications should be jargon free and abbreviations should be kept to a minimum and if used should be explained in full.*

*Communications take account of the needs of the audience by making information available, when required, in community languages or other formats, e.g. Braille, audio, large print. Signers/interpreters should be provided where appropriate.*

## 8. Parent volunteers

Many parents and carers are keen to offer assistance to their children's school, and many schools find that assistance to be invaluable. Staff should encourage the involvement of parent and carer volunteers.

Schools should actively seek to identify the skills available to them through their Parent Forum, e.g. surveys/questionnaires through the school or the Parent Council.

For the selection of any adults to undertake work in schools (including parents and carers), South Lanarkshire Council has in place an agreed set of procedures, including disclosure procedures that are regularly reviewed. It is important that Education Resources and schools understand the need for these procedures and that they are seen to work together to ensure that the potential benefit of parent volunteers is not lost.



## 9. Supporting learning and overcoming barriers to learning

This strategy has been developed around the existing good practice in South Lanarkshire to help parents support their own and children's learning. However, account has also taken of the need to look at ways of overcoming barriers that may prevent parents feeling confident and willing to be an active partner in their children's learning.

### *Overcoming barriers to learning*

It is recognised that the type and frequency of contact made by parents and with parents will be influenced by circumstances such as physical disability, working patterns, childcare and language needs.

To overcome these barriers to learning it is important in the first instance to respect the diversity, cultural and ethnic background of all parents and the community in which they live.

Flexible approaches will be taken in establishing links with parent/carers by taking account of the needs of looked after children, the provision of interpretation and signing services and removal of physical barriers in establishments to encourage and promote more meaningful parental engagement.

Parent Councils are required (by law) to report to the Parent Forum on their work over the last year. This is a key opportunity for the Parent Council to share and demonstrate what they have been involved in and achieved over the past year.

### *Supporting Learning*

Early years establishments and schools will continue to provide opportunities for parents through information events, transition programmes, activities and events as well as through curriculum updates and newsletters to share information on how to support children's learning, both in school and at home.

Support will also be provided where appropriate, to develop the skills, confidence of parents in supporting children's learning through programmes like Bookstart, Home School Partnership Programmes and Community Learning and Development activities.

Opportunities will be taken to engage with parents and share information on developments in education such as Curriculum for Excellence and Glow.

# Strategy for parental involvement

## 10. Support for parents/carers/schools

Education Resources wants to make sure that the Strategy for Parental Involvement enables parents/carers to be involved in making a difference to children's learning. Education Resources can provide support and training for parents/carers and schools on:

- *parental involvement in appointment procedures – headteacher and senior posts in schools;*
- *how to establish a Parent Council and its role and function;*
- *understanding how a school sets out its priorities (improvement planning);*
- *the development of parental involvement;*
- *communication with parents and schools;*
- *home learning – how can we support our children's learning?*
- *Curriculum for Excellence;*
- *effective meetings;*
- *Glow.*

## 11. Issues/complaints procedure

There are sometimes occasions when parents and carers are not satisfied with the quality of service they or their children receive. On such occasions parents and carers should contact their child's school to discuss their concern or complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved at school level, parents and carers should contact Education Resources by telephone 01698 454450 or write to South Lanarkshire Council, Education Resources, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton, ML3 0AE or email [parents@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:parents@southlanarkshire.gov.uk) giving details of the complaint and contact details, so that we can keep in touch.

South Lanarkshire Council has a corporate complaints procedure which can be used to raise concerns or complaints. Details are available on South Lanarkshire Council's website [www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk).

When a complaint is made, the complaint is logged and assigned to an officer of the Council to deal with. The officer will investigate the complaint and make contact with the person making the complaint, usually by telephone. On a few occasions it may not be possible to resolve the complaint and when that happens the officer will explain this to the person making the complaint.



## 12. Impact and benefit

The impact of increased partnership and parental involvement will undoubtedly be on the difference that this will make to children's learning.

It will lead to a greater understanding of how schools can best meet the needs of children, parents and the wider community; establish closer links between parents and the school and develop a much more open approach to how parents can support their children's learning.

### *Monitoring*

The impact and benefit will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the quality agenda. The quality and extent of parents' involvement in their children's learning will be assessed through the quality framework – How Good is Our School?: Partnership with Parents.

## 13. Your views

We would like to hear your views on our Strategy for Parental Involvement. You can let us know in writing by contacting

**Education Resources  
(Parental Involvement)  
Almada Street  
Hamilton  
ML3 0AA**

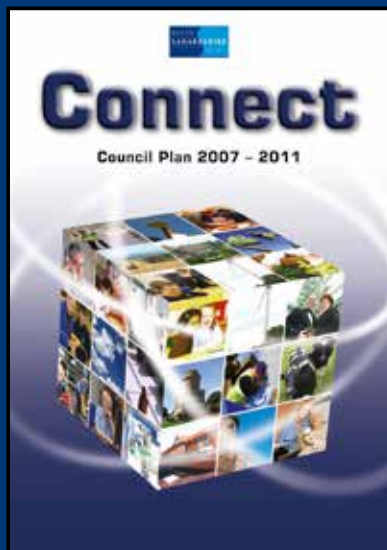
or through email on:- [parents@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:parents@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

# Strategy for parental involvement

The requirements of the Disability Discriminations Act (DDA), Additional Support Legislation (ASL), Race, Equality and Human Rights Legislation underpin this strategy and should be taken account of in all associated policies and procedures.

## Key policies and plans

- *Council Plan : Connect*
- *Community Plan*
- *Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)*
- *The Children (Scotland) Act 1995*
- *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*
- *Education Resources' Plan*
- *Education Resources' Policy Statements*
- *A Curriculum for Excellence (2004)*
- *Assessment is for Learning (Aifl)*
- *How good is our school 3? (Indicators 2.2/4.1/5.7)*
- *How good is community learning and development?*
- *The Child at the Centre 2*
- *Improving Scottish Education*
- *The Journey to Excellence (Part 6)*
- *Partnership with Parents, HMIE (2006)*
- *Early Years Framework*
- *Parents as Partners Toolkit (HMIE and South Lanarkshire Council versions available)*



If you need this information in another format or language,  
please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.  
Phone: 0303 123 1015 Email: [equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

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