



WHAT IS A PARENT COUNCIL?

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Parent Councils are statutory bodies, as set out in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act [2006](#). This means that Parent Councils have legal rights and responsibilities. In essence, the Parent Council is appointed by the Parent Forum (see next section) to act on its behalf. A Parent Council is run for, and by, parents at a school. The Parent Council must support the school. In law, the local authority should support a Parent Council both financially and with advice/support.

What is the Parent Forum?

The Parental Involvement Act states that every school in Scotland has a Parent Forum, which is all the parents/carers who have a child at the school. The Parent Forum decides whether they want a Parent Council and how it is constituted and organised. They may also choose the name of the group - it does not have to be called a Parent Council.

Does every school have a Parent Council?

Although most schools in Scotland do have a Parent Council, there are still a few that do not. It is up to the Parent Forum to decide this. If the Parent Forum wants a Parent Council, the local authority and the school have to help with this. . Connect has information that can help too.

What is the role of the Parent Council?

In legislation, Parent Councils (PC) are required to:

- Represent the interests of all parents/carers (the Parent Forum) to the school and the local authority
- Support learning and school improvement
- Be involved in the recruitment of senior staff, school inspections and the development of the School Improvement Planning.

How Parent Councils do this is not set out in legislation - it is up to each Parent Forum to decide what they want their PC to do.

Are there different kinds of Parent Council?

Yes, because the Parent Forum can decide how it wants its Parent Council to operate and what it wants the Parent Council to do. This is usually set out in a constitution. Some Parent Councils in small schools are made up of all parents in the school ie the Parent Council is the Parent Forum; some have sub-committees; some organise social

and fundraising events; some campaign.

What can Parent Councils get involved in?

Parent Councils can do all sorts of things, as long as they are representing and acting on behalf of the Parent Forum. This might include:

- Supporting parents to be involved in the life of the school
- Supporting parents to be involved in children's learning
- Working with the school on policies (positive behaviour, inclusion, health and wellbeing, anti-bullying, anti-racism and many more)
- Working with the school on improvement planning
- Communicating effectively with the Parent Forum and making sure the school communicates in ways that work for parents
- Gathering parents' views
- Building positive relationships across the school community
- Organising clubs, events, activities.

What is the difference between a Parent Council and a Parent Staff or Teacher Association?

Parent Councils have specific rights and responsibilities, as set out in legislation. PTAs are not part of the Parental Involvement Act. They tend to be more involved in social and fundraising events although many Parent Councils are now taking on this role instead. However, organising social and fundraising events are not part of the legal duties of Parent Councils and Parent Councils must understand and undertake their responsibilities under the Act.

Who should be on the Parent Council and who can attend meetings?

- The majority of Parent Council members *must* be parents with children at the school
- The definition of "parent" is very wide and includes everyone with a parenting role for a pupil; this could include foster parents, family members who have care of a child and those who share parenting. The Parent Council also has a responsibility to be mindful of any looked-after children.
- A parent can be on more than one Parent Council, provided they have a child at each school.
- A teacher or member of school staff can be a parent member on a Parent Council, so long as they have a child at the school. However, it is important they remember that they are there as a parent and not as a teacher or staff member
- The Chairperson *must* be a parent with a child at the school.
- The Parent Council should promote equality and fairness in their activities and recognise the diversity in the school community.
- The Headteacher (or their representative) has a right and a duty to attend all Parent Council meetings as an advisor.

- Local political representatives can attend as invited guests. Be sure to invite all your representatives and keep them informed about your work
- Parent Councils can have co-opted community members or others who can help the Parent Council with its work. In denominational schools, the local church/fairth organisation can nominate a representative.

What is the role of the Headteacher on a Parent Council?

- The Headteacher has 'a right and a duty' to attend meetings of the Parent Council as an advisor or they can send a representative. Of course, it might not always be necessary for the Head to be at a meeting, for example, if you are discussing arrangements for an event.
- The Parent Council may ask the Headteacher to provide a report at their meetings – this is up to the Parent Council as parents decide the agenda. The HT's report should not dominate proceedings.
- The Headteacher should involve the Parent Council in School Improvement Planning and encourage the Parent Council to have an active role in the development and review of school policies.

Should a Parent Council have a constitution?

It helps to have a constitution as a framework for the Parent Council's work. See the [Constitutions Resource Pack](#)

Useful resources

- [Running Committees and Meetings Resource Pack](#)
- [Money Matters Resource Pack](#)
- [Equality and Fairness Resource Pack](#)
- [Data Protection and Online Security Resource Pack](#)
- [PVG and Child Protection Resource Pack](#)
- [Parent Council Health Check - School Matters and Education](#)
- [Social Media Resource Pack](#)
- [Communicating with the School Community Resource Pack](#)

You are welcome to use information from this resource. However, if you do, please acknowledge Connect. We welcome your comments and feedback.

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