

backchat

Working for parents and carers in Scottish schools

Back to School

Many, many thanks to all our members who have renewed this year – and that’s most of you! Without your membership, we wouldn’t be here and able to support parents the way we do. We are the only charity in Scotland dedicated to helping make parental involvement in education be as good as it can be – and you, our members, make the team’s work possible.

Don’t forget that your membership brings lots of benefits – as well as our massively popular information sessions, all the parents at your school can also have access to the member’s area of the website, updates and newsletters, and the whole group benefits from the specially tailored membership-linked insurance package. You can sign up for e-newsletters and our Parents Voice survey group on the website. We’re growing our Regional Advisor network around the country so we have more folk able to work with you!

As well as supporting parents and parent groups, SPTC also works with schools and school staff, local authorities, Government and others in the education system to help build understanding about



how to work well with parents and families, and to make sure the parent perspective is always high up on their agenda.

That’s why we are so pleased that our training programme for teachers has been a success in its first year – almost 80 school staff have taken part and it has had very positive reviews. So we will be building up our work in that area to meet the growing demand.

Our Partnership Schools programme is now in its third year, thanks to funding from Skills Development Scotland, and it’s also growing. We are now working with around 30 schools in five local authority areas. The feedback from this work is very positive and we are gathering great examples of how it is

working – look out for our Year 2 report in the next few months.

In this issue of Backchat you can read about the range of things we are working on, and the different things that are happening in Scottish education. In amongst this we are busy re-designing our website to make it more user-friendly, as well as looking at our name and brand to make sure they give clear messages about what we do and who we are. So watch this space – it’s all going on here!

How should schools be funded?

Look out for our upcoming survey on fair funding in schools & how schools should be funded. We want your views so we can respond to the Scottish Government’s Fair Funding in Schools consultation. If you’re not already on Parents’ Voice, join up now!

Make sure you’re following us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#), and you’re signed up for our monthly eNewsletter. You can do this on the SPTC website - www.sptc.info



In this issue:

• Pupil Equity Fund • Fair Funding in Schools • Your questions answered • Safe money handling & much more

Governance, Fair Funding & Parental Involvement Legislation

Have you caught up with the Government's ideas and proposals for changing the way Scottish education is organised and funded? In an announcement just before the start of the summer holidays, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney, announced a number of changes across the education system, as well as publishing a consultation on different ways to fund school education, Fair Funding to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education.

The government has decided on these changes after its consultation last year - the governance review.

Over the next year or two we will see a lot of changes, from teacher education to the running of schools. A lot of the changes will have an effect on what happens with teachers and children, but might be almost invisible to parents. Other parts of the changes – like the way schools are funded and the plans to give head teachers more authority – could mean a lot of change for your child.

The Government has also announced plans to make big changes to the ways parents are represented and involved in schools and, probably, pre-school too. Watch this space for info on how that will look. We're expecting more detailed news soon, and we're part of a group along with NPFS and others who will be looking at how these changes might work best for parents.



We're putting together a Parents Voice survey to get your views on school funding, and that will help us when we comment on the Fair Funding consultation.

At the moment the way other changes are going to work – for example the plan to move more power to head teachers – are still not clear but we will keep you posted and look for your views as things develop.

You can read the consultation on Fair Funding here - www.bit.ly/sgfairfunding

Policy Round-up

Things are never dull in Scottish education but it seems especially hectic just now. As well as governance, school funding and Parental Involvement, we are being kept busy with other things affecting parents in education!

Named Person: After a Supreme Court ruling last year the Government has had to re-think the Named Person scheme and how information about families can be shared. Government has now produced a new Bill which must be considered by Parliament. The Education and Skills Committee asked for comments over the summer and we submitted our views here - www.bit.ly/infosharingSPTC

We'll keep you up to date as this moves on.

Data protection: There are strict new rules coming into force next year about how personal information can be kept and shared. It will affect every organisation, and for

parents with kids at school it will affect you and your child's information. We'll be writing new guides for Parent Councils, and will also need to make sure SPTC is doing the right thing. We are also looking at how local authorities and schools will have to change what they do, because from 2018 informed consent will be needed for any personal information to be held – that means parents will need to have full information of what data is being collected, how it will be held and how it will be shared.

PVG: There are plans to change the way the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme works, and we've been to a few meetings to talk about how it works for parent groups in schools. It's not clear what the changes will be, but we hope the scheme will catch up with the digital world and make life easier for parents and parent groups who want to get involved with school in a way that requires a PVG.

SPTC Regional Advisers - Supporting parents across Scotland

Our dedicated team of Regional Advisors are busy delivering our Information & Training Sessions across the country and have also helped to develop a new series of online sessions. We are delighted to welcome new members to the team from Moray, Aberdeenshire and Midlothian. We have asked them to introduce themselves:

“Hi, I'm **Elizabeth Watson** and I'm the new Regional Advisor for Moray. I am active in my local community; as well as being chair of Forres Academy Parent Council, I also volunteer on a number of committees. I am a firm believer in parental involvement as the key to keeping in touch with young people – both my own children and the younger generation. I am very engaged with education as I believe it is at the heart of change in communities and society.”



“Hi there, my name is **Lesley Buchan** and I am the new Regional Advisor for Aberdeenshire. I am currently the vice chair of Meldrum Primary School Parent Council (MPiP) where my three children attend. I wanted to join the SPTC team to try and encourage more parents and carers, like myself, to become more active in their children's education as I believe that parental involvement is extremely important to the education and upbringing of our children.”



“I'm **Shondra Riley**, the new Regional Advisor for Edinburgh and the Lothians. I am a volunteer School Librarian and Parent Council Chairperson at Tynewater Primary School in Midlothian. I enjoy engaging with parents to help them get involved with the school in ways that suit them. I strongly believe in the importance of parental involvement and the positive impact it can have on pupils, staff, and families.”



All our team are looking forward to working with you over the school year so do get in contact if you would like to organise a session at your school – email Jen on training@sptc.info or phone **0131 474 8022**

Money, money, money

We receive many enquiries about money – mismanagement of funds, safe money handling and spending fundraising money. It is really important that all committee members take responsibility for the funds and support the Treasurer by listening to their report at every meeting and helping to count money after events.

Our leaflet, **The role of the Parent Council/PTA Treasurer** has been updated with advice on signatories and online banking; check it out here - www.bit.ly/pctreasurer

Free Online Training Sessions

Why not try one of our popular online training sessions with a hot drink in the comfort of your own home. Visit the online booking pages below to book your free place.

Online Constitutions - Why your parent group needs a constitution and what should be in it: Dates in October, November and December: www.bit.ly/pccstitutions

Office Bearers – role of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer for new and existing office bearers:

Role of Treasurer - 28 September - www.bit.ly/pctreasurer1

Role of Secretary - 5 October - www.bit.ly/pcsecretary



Your Questions: Answered

Q: A group of parents want to run a series of fundraising events for an S2 trip abroad. They have asked if they can use our SPTC membership-linked insurance; would this be ok?

A: The only events that are or can be covered by your membership-linked insurance are events which are properly organised and agreed through the member organisation – your Parent Council. (This is for 3* and 4* members only) You could suggest this group of parents become a subcommittee of the PC as they would then come under the umbrella of the membership-linked insurance however it is vital they report back to the PC on their activities. If there is a claim, then the insurance broker will need evidence that the Parent Council were responsible for event/activity. Have a look at our leaflet Subcommittees – your questions answered for more details: www.sptc.info/sptc-leaflets/subcommittees

Q: Some of our committee members think that everyone who donates food for a Parent Council event needs a food hygiene certificate; is this true?

A: You do not need a hygiene certificate to produce or sell homemade foods under the terms of 3* or 4* membership of SPTC. The membership-linked public liability insurance protects your Parent Council against claims for food poisoning. However, you

may need a certificate or qualifications if you are using the venue's kitchen; check this when you take out the let.

Of course, you don't want to make anyone ill, so obviously it is important to have high standards of hygiene. Also, although it is not a requirement, we recommend you avoid high risk foods such as raw eggs or fresh cream.



Have a look at these leaflets for more information:
Safety at Fundraising Events - www.sptc.info/sptc-leaflets/safety-at-fundraising-events
Some Golden Rules of Catering - www.sptc.info/sptc-leaflets/some-golden-rules-of-catering-for-parent-councils-and-ptas

Q: We are organising our Parent Council Christmas Fayre and a granddad has volunteered to be Santa; should we ask him to join the PVG Scheme and have a disclosure?

A: This will not be necessary if you think about safe precautions not only to protect children but also not to put adults in a vulnerable position where they are on their own with children. For example, make sure Santa is never on his own – maybe a couple of parents could dress up as elves or fairies?! Alternatively, always insist that parents/carers accompany each child when they visit Santa's Grotto.

Pupil Equity Funding

Have you heard about Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)? Many schools have had extra money direct from Government this year as part of this new scheme, the Attainment Scotland Fund. It is aimed at giving schools a way to fund things that will help improve the school experience of children and young people where poverty is an issue.

£1200 is going to schools for each youngster from P1 – S3 who receives free school meals. Head teachers can decide how to spend the money, but any decisions should be made with the whole school community, so parents should play a key part in helping to shape choices.

You can see a list of how much each school got on the Scottish Government website here

- www.bit.ly/schoolspef

PEF money should be spent on things that help to improve the reading, writing and number skills of children. Schools can also use it to help with family learning and to make sure that moves from pre-school to P1, or P7 to S1 are as smooth as possible.

Head teachers will have to be able to show how the funding has made a difference, and use the money to do things that are not already planned.

There is more information here: www.bit.ly/pefinfo

