

connect backchat

Issue 146 Summer 2018

Connect Membership: Join us!



Parents love our information sessions!

Keep in touch!

Our contact details are:

info@connect.scot

0131 474 6199



ConnectScot



@connect_scot

Like and follow us to receive the latest news from the world of Scottish education.

Connect, formerly Scottish Parent Teacher Council, connects parents and educators to improve children's learning and lives. We have a wide range of information leaflets and resources to help parents to engage with their child's education and school on our website: www.connect.scot

Reading this as a hard copy? Would you rather receive it by email? Let us know!

It's the time of year for renewal of Connect Membership!

An increasing number of local authorities take out Connect membership for the Parent Councils in their areas - welcome, South Lanarkshire! In 2017/2018, 23 local authorities took out this group membership for their Parent Councils. In the remaining council areas, over 400 parent groups and clubs joined our membership scheme independently.

Connect Membership brings significant and essential benefits to Parent Councils and PTAs. These include:

- membership of a Scotland-wide parents' community
- membership levels to suit your group (2* to 4*)
- membership-linked insurance cover
- access to our free highly-rated training sessions
- free online workshops from your own home/school
- exclusive access to the Members' area of our website www.connect.scot where you can find our extensive range of leaflets, templates, resources, Q & As and more
- our informative monthly eNewsletters and termly editions of Backchat
- support and advice from our office team via our parents' helpline on **0131 474 6199** plus support by email or Facebook
- the opportunity to share your views and shape policy at Connect and in Scottish education by joining our Parents' Voice survey group at <http://bit.ly/ConnectPV>

Feedback from two Information and Training sessions

Parent Council Essentials

'Excellent informal sessions, with lots of opportunity for discussion'

'Very well run, informal session where everyone could get involved'

'The session was very informative and relaxed. I very much enjoyed it and I am feeling very motivated!'

Helping to Improve your School

'Very informative with good information resources to take away'

'A great session, really glad I came.'

connect
supporting partnerships in education



Connect's Priorities

Connect is dedicated to making parental engagement in education as good as it can be. All the evidence shows that this is what makes the difference to children's lives. Our Manifesto sets out the current focus of our work: school improvement as a shared endeavour; fairness; the impact of money worries on families and how parent groups can help with this (see our Survey Report on Support for Families with Money Worries opposite); literacy; healthy, active children who learn to handle risk. <http://bit.ly/ConnectManifesto>



Partnership Schools Scotland

Eleanor Coner, Connect's Partnership Development Officer, leads our Partnership Schools Scotland programme. Here she describes the exciting and transformative work of Partnership Schools Scotland, which is supported by Skills Development Scotland.

Partnership Schools Scotland at a glance

- in eight local authorities
- in over 40 schools
- Year 3 of a five year pilot
- supported by Skills Development Scotland

Our programme is based on the tried and tested work over several decades of Dr Joyce Epstein from the National Network of Partnership Schools in the US. It is about creating partnerships in schools and wider communities to engage more, and different, people in children's learning and making sure that families are part of the decision-making process. It engages with families on their own terms, by finding different ways to involve parents so they can support their child at home.

Parental Engagement

It is important for everyone to understand parental engagement is not always about parents and carers coming in to school. Many families cannot or will not come into school due to barriers such as work, family, money, their own experience of school or a lack of confidence. We challenge schools to think about how they currently engage parents and we suggest different types of involvement to reach out to families. The six types of involvement we use are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

How does Partnership Schools Work?

Initially we speak to the headteacher about what the school is currently doing. Are they in the right place to take the Partnership Schools approach forward? We invite them to think about who might be involved - parents, children, staff, the wider community such as local businesses or faith organisations. Two training sessions lead to an annual plan, with up to four goals, starting with small achievable steps and with evaluation at every stage. We're delighted to be working with so many schools, including primary, secondary and special schools. We're also speaking to a number of early learning and childcare centres who are interested in taking part. Read more at <https://www.connect.scot/partnerships>.



PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS SCOTLAND: WHAT'S NEXT?

Next term, we're really excited to be working with the family learning team in North Ayrshire to introduce the model into twelve schools. By working with Council officers across Scotland, as well as with schools, we hope that Partnership Schools is the catalyst for change and the vehicle for sharing good practice. Our ambition for Partnership Schools is to help Scottish schools to change their cultures, so that everyone understands what true parental engagement means. Ultimately, it's all about making the difference to children.



Connect's office team Jen and Joan walked the 96 miles of the West Highland Way to raise awareness of parental engagement and Connect! Well done, both of you!

Connect is getting ready for next term!

Over the summer, we will be

- preparing support for Parent Councils because the revised Parental Involvement Act will include new Parent Council duties around inclusion, equality and respect
- working on a new series of leaflets and health checks for Parent Councils to help with this, provisionally called 'Everyone is Important'
- revising our Information & Training sessions to build in the 'Everyone is Important' message
- creating a new online session for our Members on this
- preparing two new Information & Training sessions for Parent Councils and parent groups on School Improvement Planning and Helping to Support Your School - look out for more details!
- finalising an anti-bullying leaflet with *respectme* for parent groups
- revising Partnership Schools materials to reflect our learning over the last three years.

Parents' Voice Survey Follow Up Actions: Anti-Bullying Survey with *respectme*

Thanks to our Parents' Voice survey group and the 540 responses we received, we were able to produce a hard-hitting report which received lots of media coverage.

<http://bit.ly/PVanti-bullyingreport>

Some of your experiences made it clear that families can feel they have nowhere to go for help when their child is being bullied.



So we would like to campaign for a Scottish helpline for those affected by bullying. We are also asking for specialist training in schools for children and young people.

We ran two online workshops with *respectme* on dealing with bullying behaviour, one for parents and one for Parent Councils. The success of these means that we will be running more next term. We'll publicise new dates on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

We are also writing a leaflet for Parent Councils with *respectme*.

Parents' Voice Survey Follow Up Actions: Support for Families with Money Worries

We were saddened to read about the misery experienced by families in financial hardship in some of the 394 responses to our survey. Our report includes these painful personal experiences. It also includes many good ideas from parents for helping. Everyone felt that much more could be done.

We are making sure your voices are heard and that the issue is being kept to the fore in the media. In partnership with the Child Poverty Action Group, we're producing information to help Parent Councils as they contribute to an inclusive, caring school community.

Please read the report to see what more your school could do.

<http://bit.ly/ConnectPVpoverty>

Guest Column: Children in Scotland

Understanding children's rights to extra support with their learning

All children have the right to extra help with their learning and for their views to be considered when decisions are being made about their support.

Recent changes to education law extended the rights of children with additional support needs aged 12–15 to have many of the same rights as their parents/carers and young people over 16. *(This does not mean that parents and carers do not have rights after their child turns 12 but that the child can act on their own behalf if they want to.)*

Once a child reaches their 12th birthday they have the right to:

- ask their school to find out if they need extra support
- have a say in plans and decisions made about the support they get
- have an advocate with them at meetings to help them share their views and understand what's going on
- question plans made for them or make an appeal to the **Additional Support Needs Tribunal** if they are not happy with what certain plans say
- get help to sort out any disagreements about their support.

A new children's service - *My Rights, My Say* - has been set up to help children use their rights. A partnership between Children in Scotland, Enquire, Partners in Advocacy and Cairn Legal, the service can support children to find out about and take up their new rights through advice and information, advocacy and legal representation. If a child needs help to use their rights or feels their school has not listened to them, *My Rights, My Say* advocacy workers can help a child share their views.

www.reach.scot/myrightsmysay - for children aged 12-15

www.enquire.org.uk/myrightsmysay - for parents



Connect in Action:

April to June 2018

We are proud to be working hard on your behalf! In the summer term we

- ran a snap survey on national assessment tests for P1s
- carried out a Parents' Voice survey on proposed changes to the Protection of Vulnerable Groups guidance
- had our anti-bullying and support for families with money worries surveys featured in The Herald, Times Educational Supplement Scotland and on BBC Radio Scotland
- met with MSPs
- responded to seven consultations
- met with Early Years Scotland
- went to Argyll & Bute, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Fife, Edinburgh, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway, Falkirk, Aberdeenshire, North Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire, Perth & Kinross and Stirling to meet many, many wonderful parents!

Footnotes: Q&A with Connect

In this regular column, we answer your questions. Email them to info@connect.scot.

Q: Our summer fair will include a photo opportunity for children to sit on a school parent's pony, which will be dressed as a unicorn. Does our Connect insurance cover us for this?

A: You will be covered, as long as you do a full risk assessment, using our template, guidance and leaflet on ponyrides. However, if you have a commercial provider of your pony rides operating the rides, you must see/check their public liability insurance. If in doubt, phone us.

Q: Our school will no longer give us the P7 class lists for the disco we organise because of GDPR. Without this, we can't track ticket sales nor can we keep a register at the event.

A: GDPR relates to personal data - just the first name of a child would not be personal data.

Read our Guide to Data Protection and use our Data Protection Policy template for your parent group.

<http://bit.ly/ConnectGDPRleaflets>

