



SETTING UP A NEW PARENT COUNCIL

Most schools now have a Parent Council (PC). However, some still do not and others may be starting again, having wound up. New or merged schools may wish to set up a new Parent Council too. We hope this resource will help you.

In this document, 'parent' refers to all parents, carers, and others with caring responsibility for children at a school. Parent Councils were established under the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006](#). Local authorities have an important role to play in establishing a new Parent Council so you will need to contact your Parental Involvement Officer. You can find out more in Section 6 of the Act. If you need further help setting up your Parent Council, please email Connect.

Step 1

Set up a working group with responsibility for drafting a constitution. Think about who you would like to include on this group. In a small school, you may want to invite all the parents. In larger schools, you could include parents from each class/year group. You may wish to seek the advice of others, but it is for the Parent Forum to decide on the type of Parent Council they want and need. The Parent Forum consists of all the parents/carers with children at the school.

Step 2

The working group should draft a constitution which will then be presented to the Parent Forum for approval at a meeting, to which all parents should be invited. Copies of the draft constitution should be circulated in advance. Connect's model constitution in our [Constitutions Resource Pack](#) includes more detail on what your constitution might include. We have set out the main discussion points below. Think about adopting a few policies and procedures from the outset. Connect has guidance and template policies for your working group to look at. You don't need to mention all of these specifically in your draft constitution but you could adopt them at the Parent Forum meeting which sets up the Parent Council and note this in the minutes.

- Banking – [Money Matters for Parent Groups and Treasurers Resource Pack](#)
- Record keeping – [Data Protection and Online Security Resource Pack](#)
- Child protection – [Protection of Vulnerable Groups and Child Protection Resource Pack](#)
- Code of Conduct – Code of Conduct can be found in the [Running Committees and Meetings Resource Pack](#)
- Complaints – [Template Complaints Policy and Procedure for Parent Groups](#)
- Social Media Policy – [Social Media Pack](#)

Step 3

Organise a meeting for all parents/carers. The meeting should introduce the draft constitution and make time for discussion and questions. Amendments can be made or debated, and then you can move to adopt the constitution.

Constitution Discussion Points for your Working Group and Parent Forum

The topics below can be included in your discussions as you draft, then consult on, your constitution. Check Connect's [Constitutions Resource Pack](#) for other items you will need to think about before you finalise your constitution.

Name

Although you can call the Parent Council whatever you want (eg Friends of...), consider deciding what you want the Parent Council to do before you choose the name of it. The Parent Forum will have to agree the name, along with the rest of the constitution.

Aims/purposes

- Discuss what the Parent Council will be doing or might want to do in future. Think about keeping the aims general to capture what your group would like to do (or many have done in the past). For example: Supporting the school in its work with pupils (for example - fundraising, buying equipment, running clubs, running workshops for parents, etc)
- Representing the views of parents (for example - discussing school policies or lobbying the local authority)
- Promoting contact between the school, parents, pupils, providers of nursery education and the community (for example - social events, improving communications to make sure they are parent friendly)
- Reporting to the Parent Forum (for example - open meetings, newsletters, annual general meeting)

Membership and Selection

Who should be on the Parent Council, how many parents/members will you need and how will they be selected? Remember, parent members should always be in the majority on the Parent Council and it should aim to reflect the diversity of the Parent Forum and the school community.

If you have lots of enthusiastic volunteers for the Parent Council, it is a good idea to mention a range eg from 5 to 20 members – to allow the PC flexibility. There are a few requirements in legislation:

- Members must be drawn from parents/carers with children currently at the school
- The headteacher (or their representative) has a right and duty to attend all Parent Council meetings as an advisor (not a member)
- In denominational schools, the local church can nominate a representative.

If possible, it can be a good idea to have parent members from each class/year group. This is a great way of finding out the views and issues from across the school. Some parents may wish to be involved in the PC but cannot attend face-to-face meetings – think about involving parents/carers via email or having a mix of face-to-face and online meetings.

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It is good practice for each new member of your PC to be asked to read and agree to your Child Protection Policy (see the PVG and Child Protection Pack) and your Code of Conduct (you can find a template in the Running Committees and Meetings Pack), see above.

Co-opted Members

Once the parent membership has been decided, then the working party can consider whether anyone else should be invited to be a co-opted member. School staff, pupils, community representatives and others could either be invited to attend meetings as advisors or on a 'needs basis'.

Office Bearers

The only requirement in legislation is that the person who chairs PC meetings must *always* be a parent/carer with children at the school. The task of chairing can always be shared, as long as a parent does it.

You can have job-share arrangements for the office bearer roles if your constitution does not prohibit this. The legislation also suggests that a clerk can be appointed to undertake the roles of Secretary and Treasurer. If the clerk is not a PC member, they can be paid and the local authority may provide funding for this. The paid clerk may be a parent at the school or a member of the local community.

Sub-committees or sub-groups

Another feature of your constitution and how your PC is run might be sub-committees or sub-groups. These should report back to the Parent Council at every meeting and must abide by the same constitution and policies etc. You can have short-life groups (eg working on school grounds improvements) or longer-life ones (eg social and fundraising or the Parent Teacher/Staff Association can become a sub-committee of the Parent Council).

AGM

The legislation states that a PC *must* report to the Parent Forum at least once a year and this is done at the AGM. The agenda should include reports on the activities of the PC and any sub-committees, on any money raised and how it has been spent. It is also the occasion when new Parent Council members are appointed. As part of the constitution, the working party needs to decide whether any office bearers are to be chosen at the AGM or at the first PC meeting after it. One important feature of all AGMs is that accounts have to be presented for approval. These accounts should be checked independently, preferably by someone with a financial background who is not a member of the PC or a relative of one. Think about when your AGM will take place – a year from the meeting at which the constitution was adopted?

Connect has many resources to support new Parent Councils. Find out [about Connect Membership](#) here, and share the [website](#) link and Connect information with all PC members, staff and parents.. Follow Connect on social media here [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

- [Parent Council Essentials Resource Pack](#)
- [Running Parent Councils, Committees and Meetings Resource Pack](#)
- [Equality and Fairness Resource Pack](#)
- [Communicating with the School Community Resource Pack](#)
[PC/PTA Chair and Secretary 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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