

What is a Parent Council?

The Parent Council is the committee appointed by the Parent Forum to run matters on its behalf. A Parent Council is not run by the school or the local authority but by the parents in the school.

What is the Parent Forum?

The 2006 Parental Involvement Act states that every school in Scotland has a Parent Forum, which consists of all the parents/carers who have a child at the school. They are automatically members, whether they like it or not! The Parent Forum decides whether they want a Parent Council and how it is constituted and organised.

What are the main responsibilities of the Parent Council to the Parent Forum?

The Parent Forum can expect the following from the Parent Council (PC):

- To get news and information about the PC and its activities
- To be invited to be involved in PC activities, such as sub-committees
- To be asked for their opinion by the PC on issues about the school community
- To have all views listened to and represented in an equal and fair way
- To be involved in how the PC is organised and how it operates, for example, making changes to the constitution
- For the PC to be inclusive and recognise the diversity in Scottish schools by involving parents from the whole school community.

What do Parent Councils do?

The main aim of a Parent Council is to try to represent the interests of all parents/carers to the school and the local authority, help the school community work together, supporting learning and school improvement.

The activities of a Parent Council are not set out in legislation so it is up to each Parent Forum to decide what they want their PC to do. It does have some rights (e.g. involvement in recruiting senior staff).

There are many things a Parent Council may get involved in, including:

- Discussing (and where needed acting on) issues of interest to parents, including school policies (eg behaviour, homework/home learning, health & safety)
- Helping parents to support their child's learning
- Making sure that parents get the information they need in an accessible way and the school gets feedback on parents' views
- Improving links between *all* parents and the school/local authority
- Organising and running extra-curricular clubs and activities.

The Parent Council **must** be involved in:

- The appointment of senior staff, eg the recruitment of a new Headteacher
- School inspections
- The development of the School Improvement Plan and Standards & Quality Reports that set out how the school plans to change and improve how it works.

Are there any rules about who should be on the Parent Council?

Although there are no rules about the number of members on a Parent Council, there are certain things to be aware of:

- 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 divorced/separated couples. 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 can be a parent-member on a Parent Council, so long as they have a child at the school. However, it is important to remind them they are there as a parent and not as a teacher.
- 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.

Should a Parent Council have a constitution?

It is good practice to have a constitution, as this gives a framework to the group. It should contain a description of the Parent Council, and how it will carry out its aims & objectives.

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 or they can send a representative. Of course, it might not always be necessary for the Headteacher to be at a meeting, for example if you are discussing arrangements for an event. The Headteacher is an advisor to the Parent Council and does not have a vote.
- The Parent Council may ask the Headteacher to report to their meetings but remember that parents decide on the agenda and the HT’s report should not dominate proceedings.
- The Headteacher should involve the Parent Council in development of the School Improvement Plan and Standards & Quality Reports and encourage the Parent Council to have an active role in the development/review of school policies.

What is the difference between a Parent Council and the PTA?

There are some overlaps between what a PC and the PTA do, although a PTA tends to focus on social and fundraising activities. The Parent Council and the PTA work together and often share members.

One of the main differences between the PTA and the Parent Council is that a Headteacher has a right and a duty to attend PC meetings; which is not the case with the PTA meetings.

How do I find out what my PC is doing?

The meeting minutes of the Parent Council are sent out through the Schools App after each meeting. Additional methods and sources of communication can be arranged. Please email the school or the PC directly to ask for any specific information.

Can I ask to see the minutes and accounts from my PC?

Yes. Remember, the Parent Council is accountable to the Parent Forum and these documents should always be available to parents at the school.

I am not a member of the Parent Council. Can I still attend the meetings?

Yes. Parent Council meetings are public meetings and open to all members of the Parent Forum. If you have an issue that you want to bring to the PC, then please inform us in advance so that it can be added to the agenda. The PC cannot take up individual parents' issues but you can ask for advice about this e.g. raise a more general issue.

I'm not happy with the work of the PC; what can I do?

The first step is to please let us know of your complaint. We have been a very small team recently and would love some additional input, so please do consider joining us and helping to bring about any changes you feel are necessary. Alternatively please feel free to put your comments on paper and write to the PC Chair (lodge a complaint) and ask how the issues raised are going to be addressed. You can also contact the headteacher and/or the local authority if the PC is not addressing your concern in a fair and open way. You can contact Connect for advice too.

My child is being bullied; can I ask the PC to help me with this?

It is not the role of a Parent Council to tackle individual issues. However, this might be an opportunity, for example, for them to look at the whole school anti-bullying or positive behaviour policy - has it been updated recently? How is it implemented? What tracking information does the school have on bullying and how it is dealt with? Can the Parent Council take the lead on a whole school community approach to challenging bullying behaviour, involving pupils, parents and staff?

My child has Additional Support Needs; what can the Parent Council do for me?

Although the Parent Council cannot discuss individual issues, it can raise awareness of Additional Support for Learning (ASL) and, for instance, ask the school to organise information sessions for parents to get advice and information. You could ask for ASL to be a regular item on the agenda at PC meetings, for there to be an ASL rep on the Parent Council or ask to form a sub-committee or more informal group to support families.

A group of parents are very concerned about the traffic and parking around our school. Is this something the Parent Council can look at on our behalf?

Absolutely! The Parent Council is there to represent your views and you should ask the Parent Council to help. For example, the Parent Council could ask the local police officer to come and talk at a meeting; or lobby the local council to make improvements to signage near the school; or involve the children and/or the council's road safety officer.