Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute

March 2017

Research to inform the review of the impact of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act

Colin Hockaday

Lucy Setterfield

Rachel Ormston

Carolyn Black

Contents

Executive summary

Background

Ipsos MORI Scotland were commissioned by the National Parent Forum for Scotland (NPFS) to undertake independent research to inform their review of the impact of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act. The research ran parallel to NPFS's own research, which involved a formal call for evidence and consultation process and discussion with key stakeholders.

Methodology

The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach to allow both the nature and the scale of experiences of the Parental Involvement Act to be explored. It comprised three main strands:

- Desk research (a literature review and mapping exercise to gather information about the implementation of the Act across local authorities)

- A telephone survey of 502 parents across Scotland

- Qualitative interviews with head teachers, Parent Council members and other parents from four case study schools.

Local authority Parental Involvement Strategy Mapping

The approach local authorities had taken to implementing the Act was mapped by establishing a framework of questions through which we could apply a consistent set of criteria to assess the local authority strategies and to identify possible case study areas. Examples of questions in the framework included:

- Does the strategy use the 2006 guidance?

- When was the strategy last updated?

- Is there any evidence of the strategy being informed by research/consultation with parents and carers?

- Does the strategy have clear, measurable aims, objectives and outputs?

Substantial variation between the approaches of the different local authorities were found in terms of the publically available documentation and information related to parental involvement.

Twenty-three strategies were available online, a further six were made available on request. However, we were unable to find a parental involvement strategy, or contact the Parental Involvement Officer, for three local authorities. Only six were easily accessible (e.g. clearly linked from schools/education/parents' pages on the local authority website).

Very few of the local authority strategies were up-to-date, had details of how/when they would be reviewed, had evidence of parent consultation or had clear objectives. However, of the 29 that were available, all followed the 2006 parental involvement guidelines.

Areas for further consideration

Further consideration should be given to improving the consistency of local authority parental involvement strategies. Improvements could be made in four key areas:

- More regular review and monitoring of key strategy documents

- Strategy documents to contain clear, measurable aims to ensure progress can be assessed

- Strategies to be easily accessible online to parents

- Strategies to be available in a format that is easily understandable to all parents, free from jargon and technical language.

In order to aid these improvements, consideration should be given to linking it more explicitly to other key policy documents such as *Curriculum for Excellence*, GIRFEC, National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education[1] and the Delivery Plan for Scottish Education[2].

Home/school partnership – communication

Overall parents were satisfied with the type and level of communication they received from their child's school.

There has been a clear move towards modern communication methods and parents were generally positive about this – but there were some reservations about the use of social media specifically. However, there was a concern that moving too quickly to new technology would leave some parents falling behind.

In general, parents preferred the school to contact them directly rather than having to seek out information themselves. Therefore, use of email or text to signpost to other more in-depth information was thought to be important.

Parents felt that they should have more information on the topics their child is learning at school, and how it is being taught, in advance of the curriculum commencing.

Parents felt schools were not consulting as much as they should or if they did it was after something had happened not before. However, schools found that any attempts at consultation were not widely taken up by parents.

---

[1] Scottish Government (2016) National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education - achieving excellence and equity. Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/01/8314

[2] Scottish Government (2016) Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education: A Delivery Plan for Scotland. Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/06/3853

- While schools should continue to embrace new technology, they should consider retaining other more traditional options for those parents who prefer them

- Increase consultation opportunities for the parent forum as a whole

- Raise awareness of methods of communication available to parents through the school

- Increase the amount of information available on children's learning

- In secondary schools, provide clarity over who parents should approach (e.g. guidance teacher) if they have an issue they wish to discuss.

Home/school partnership – parental involvement

Creating a welcoming environment for parents was a key goal for the case study schools. However, they felt that parental involvement lessened as children progress through the education system.

Parents felt more comfortable getting involved in wider school activities than learning activities with the most common interaction through traditional opportunities such as parents' evenings and events such as school plays and concerts. There was a notable difference between parents in the primary and secondary sectors. Those with children at primary school were much more likely to get involved with the life of the school than those with children in the secondary sector.

Schools were making opportunities available to parents to get involved but these opportunities were not always taken up, particularly those focused on learning and teaching (rather than social or fundraising events).

There were several reasons for limited involvement from parents. These included:

- Potentially disadvantaged groups (e.g. those with low levels of literacy, those from a deprived background, those with a mental health condition) often had negative experiences of education which discouraged them from getting involved with the school. This was thought to be because their negative interactions at school in the past meant that they were less likely to visit the school and or interact with teaching staff due to feeling intimidated or a lack of trust.

- A lack of time due to work commitments, childcare responsibilities or other family commitments

- Non-residents parents are not always provided with information about the opportunities available to them

- A lack of awareness of the opportunities available to parents.

Areas for further consideration

- Further thought should be given to increasing parental involvement in secondary schools

- Schools should ensure that sufficient advance notice of events and activities is provided to maximise parent participation

- Schools should explore ways of making school activities more accessible and flexible for working parents

- Further thought should be given to involving potentially disadvantaged groups in school life – although it should be recognised that tailored approaches will be required to allow for parents' diverse needs and circumstances.

Learning at home

Most parents, and to lesser extent Parent Council members, had limited knowledge of what learning at home meant in the context of the Act. For the most part, they discussed learning at home synonymously with homework, suggesting that the broader definition of learning at home adopted by the Act has not reached parents.

While there was understanding from parents that it was beneficial for them to become involved in their child's learning, there was some concern that if there was too much of a focus on learning at home it could widen the deprivation attainment gap for those children whose parents may be less inclined to support them at home or do not have the time to do so.

With the exception of one case study, learning at home was an area in which head teachers felt they could improve.

As with many other features of parental involvement, those with children in secondary school found it more difficult to support their child than those with children in primary school. It was common for parents to feel unsure about their ability to understand some of the work their child was doing as they got older.

As previously discussed, parents did not often mention other forms of learning activities outside of homework unless prompted. However, when they were discussed, some practical barriers were raised: financial constraints and a lack of public transport in rural areas.

Areas for consideration

- The idea of learning at home as a wider concept than just 'homework' is promoted to parents, particularly to those with older children.

- Greater promotion of learning at home could be through schools in the form of support and information but would also benefit from more focus at a national level

- Greater thought should be given to how to support deprived parents help their child learn at home – and how to support those children who do not receive that support.

Parental Representation

Basic awareness of Parent Councils was high among parents in our survey – 90% said there was a Parent Council in their child's school, while just 8% were unsure (2% said there was no Parent Council). Parents were most likely to know that the Parent Council was involved in fundraising and less likely to report awareness of the Parent Council playing a role in relation to supporting parental involvement in their child's learning and in the recruitment of senior school staff.

Descriptions of the role of Parent Councils offered by participants in the qualitative research focused on three broad areas – fundraising and events, representing parents' views, and feeding into school improvement. However, parents who were not involved with Parent Councils were unclear about their precise roles and activities.

Views on how the Parent Council communicated and involved the wider parent forum were mixed. There was praise for attempts to communicate more actively, and in different ways – for example, via Facebook. However, some parents indicated that they want to know more – for example, parents talked about wanting to know in advance how the Parent Council plan to spend money they are aiming to raise, or about specifics of school plans.

There were concerns over the representativeness of Parent Councils and this focused on two key issues:

- there was a perception that having a 'gender-balanced' Parent Council remained quite unusual.

- difficulties recruiting Parent Council members from more deprived, less middle-class, and less formally educated backgrounds.

A further barrier to joining the Parent Council was that parents were put off by an impression that they were 'cliquey' and that new members and new ideas were not welcome.

Areas for consideration

- Greater clarity is required in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the Parent Council (both for new council members and the wider parent forum).

- Parent Councils should use multiple channels of communication to encourage a two-way conversation with the parent forum.

- There remains a need to encourage more men to join Parent Councils. It should be ensured that discussions are inclusive and activities appeal to men as well as women.

- Engaging more parents from deprived backgrounds is a major challenge for Parent Councils. More guidance and support as to how to encourage parents from different backgrounds to join Parent Councils may be needed.

- The 2006 Act states that it is up to parents to decide what to call their Parent Council – suggestions on how to 'rebrand' them to sound less intimidating and formal might be helpful.

It is important to note that in this report we refer to parental involvement, not parental engagement. Since the Act in 2006, the literature around parental involvement now uses the terminology 'parental engagement'. While parental involvement refers to the relationship between the parents and the school their child attends, parental engagement is considered to be active involvement in all aspects of their child's learning. Parental engagement represents a greater 'commitment, ownership of action' than parental involvement within educational settings

such as early learning and childcare settings or schools[3]. However, the scope of this research was to review the impact of the 2006 Act and therefore the focus remains on parental involvement. That said, there are instances where participants referred to parental engagement and we have reported their comments as spoken.

1. Introduction and background

Ipsos MORI Scotland were commissioned by the National Parent Forum for Scotland (NPFS) to undertake independent research to inform their review of the impact of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act. Our research ran parallel to NPFS's own research, which involved a formal call for evidence and consultation process and discussion with key stakeholders.

The Act provides a legislative framework to support the positive learning and development of children and young people and focusses on securing the following outcomes:

- **Learning at home** – recognising that parents are important educators of children and that learning starts and continues at home
- **Home school partnerships** – securing the shared responsibilities of parents, schools and the wider community in working together to educate children
- **Parental representation** – providing a framework in which parents have the opportunity to express their views on their children's education and have these views taken into consideration through Parent Forums and representation through Parent Councils.

The Act established a duty on each local authority to develop and implement a parental involvement strategy and the (then) Scottish Executive published detailed guidance[4] for local authorities on what should be contained in their strategy, reflecting the intended outcomes of the legislation. Local authorities are expected to periodically review their strategy and to monitor its implementation.

The Act also required local authorities to set out their arrangements for "handling any complaints from a person, or someone acting on their behalf, in connection with how the authority carries out its functions under the Act, or fails to carry these out, in respect of that person". Reviewing the complaints procedure was not in the scope of this research.

The Act is complemented by the National Parenting Strategy[5] that addresses the importance of the home environment on children's learning, health and wellbeing, and addresses the wider issues that parents and carers face in providing an educational and nurturing environment for their children at home. The strategy emphasises the Scottish Government's commitment to providing coordinated information and support to parents while addressing the specific challenges faced by parents.

---

[3] Goodall, J. and Montgomery, C. (2014). 'Parental involvement to parental engagement: a continuum', *Education Review,* 66 (4), Pages 399-410.

[4] Scottish Schools (parental involvement) act 2006 guidance, found on http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/parentalinvolvementguidance_tcm4-374238.pdf, accessed 19/04/2016

[5] *National Parenting Strategy: Making a positive difference to children and young people through parenting*, The Scottish Government, found on: http://www.gov.scot/resource/0040/00403769.pdf , accessed 20/04/2016

2. Methodology

The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach to allow both the nature and the scale of experiences of the Parental Involvement Act to be explored. It comprised three main strands:

- Desk research (a literature review and mapping exercise to gather information about the implementation of the Act across local authorities)

- A telephone survey of 502 parents across Scotland

- Qualitative interviews with head teachers, Parent Council members and other parents from four case study schools

Strand one: Desk research

The first strand of the research involved a scoping phase, to review what is currently known from the literature on parental involvement in Scotland, and to establish how engaged different local authorities are with the Act. The local authority mapping exercise gathered information (initially via online searching, followed by contact with Parental Involvement Officers for each local authority) on each local authority in Scotland, including: whether or not their Parental Involvement Strategy was up to date and was available online; whether the development of strategies involved any consultation or research with parents; and if there was any progression or development to report since the previous strategy. The research team also asked the Parental Involvement Officer for each area whether there were any additional parental involvement initiatives that may not be available or easily accessible online. The research team used this information to provide an overview of how local authorities across Scotland are implementing the Act, and to identify examples of good practice or areas for improvement.

Strand two: Quantitative telephone survey

A telephone survey of 502 parents across Scotland was undertaken between 25th July and 14th August 2016. The sample was drawn from a targeted sample and quotas were set on gender, socio-economic classification and primary and secondary school parents to ensure that the survey included mothers and fathers, parents from different backgrounds, and parents whose children are at different stages of school. The survey was representative of resident parents across Scotland. However, the scope of the research did not allow us to include non-resident parents.

The questionnaire took around 15 minutes to complete, and was designed by the Ipsos MORI research team in collaboration with NPFS (Appendix A). The survey explored a variety of subjects including: the ways in which schools communicate with parents; how frequently parents receive communication; the ways in which they get involved with the school; their awareness of being part of a parent forum; and the Parent Council at their child's school.

All interviews were completed by Ipsos MORI telephone interviewers, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). If parents had more than one child currently at school, they were asked to answer the questions based on one child only, to ensure that any differences in experiences of parental involvement at different stages of children's schooling were clear. If they had a child at both primary and secondary school, then CATI would select which child they should answer the survey about, based on quotas. However, if they had more than one child at either primary or secondary, then they were asked to answer questions relating to the child whose birthday is coming up next.

Strand three: Qualitative case studies

Ipsos MORI researchers carried out qualitative research in four case study schools. Schools were selected to ensure diversity across the case studies in terms of: the type of school (primary or secondary); whether they were in urban or rural areas; levels of deprivation in the catchment areas; and the level of local authority engagement with the Parental Involvement Act (based on findings from the local authority mapping).

Case study	Type of school	Urban/ rural	Level of deprivation	Level of local authority engagement with Parental Involvement Act (from local authority mapping)
1	Primary school	Urban	Low	Medium
2	Primary school	Urban	High	Low
3	Secondary	Urban	High	High
4	Community school[6]	Rural	Medium	Medium

The sample was drawn based on schools which met these criteria using the Scottish Schools' database. Only the team at Ipsos MORI were involved with the sampling and selection; neither NPFS were aware which schools had been selected. Throughout the report, if references are made to particular schools, they will be referred to as case studies 1-4.

Recruitment

Once case study schools were selected, initial advance letters were sent to head teachers (Appendix B) which explained the purpose of the research and highlighted what their participation would involve. Following the letter, a member of the research team called each head teacher to further discuss the purpose of the research and to establish if they would be willing to participate.

---

[6] A community school that serves both primary and secondary pupils.

At each school, we aimed to carry out:

- Interviews with the head teacher

- A group interview with members of the Parent Council

- A group interview with parents who were not involved with the Parent Council

In case study 2, parent interviews were conducted one-to-one rather than as a group, while for case study 1, a further group interview was conducted with Parent Council members who were not parents at the school (known as co-opted Parent Council members).

For all interviews, topic guides were used to direct the discussion and ensure consistency across the four case studies. These were designed by the Ipsos MORI research team, in collaboration with NPFS. All interviews and group facilitation were undertaken by members of the research team.

3. Literature review

A literature review was carried out in order to identify how, if at all, policy and practice on parental involvement has evolved since the passing of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. While the current body of evidence that explores parental involvement is limited, particularly within a Scottish context, the evidence uncovered highlights the recognition among a range of audiences of the important role parental involvement plays in helping to close the deprivation based attainment gap.

Recent policy developments

This year, the Scottish Government identified parental engagement as one of the six key drivers for improvement, outlined in its National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education[7]. It acknowledges the need for improvement in how parents and families engage with teachers and partners to support their children, and to increase the say parents have in leading improvements within schools. As part of this improvement process, it is recognised that more evidence is required to monitor levels of parental engagement within schools, and the impact it has upon children's learning. It is proposed this will be done through local authority self-evaluation reports, pre-inspection questionnaires and evidence on the impact parents and Parent Councils have upon helping schools to improve.

Building upon the National Improvement Framework, the Scottish Government's Delivery Plan for Scotland8 outlines how it intends to close the gap in attainment and implement the key drivers of the National Improvement Framework. In relation to parental engagement, the Plan outlines the actions that will be taken to improve parental engagement in children's education and for parents and teachers to become 'key decision makers' in the day to day lives of their schools. These include the development and implementation of a menu of evidence based family learning programmes by December 2017. This is to ensure that families have access to evidence based family learning programmes that reduce inequity, raise attainment, increase employability, support better health and wellbeing outcomes rather than solely to increase parents' participation.

The report also outlines intentions to deliver a number of improvements to the ways schools communicate with and support parents over the next two years, such as: improvements to online resources for parents; and the development of a comprehensive parent communication plan.

Parental involvement strategies

Recent research and policy reports have recommended approaches as to how local authorities and schools can most effectively implement their parental involvement strategies. Their key recommendations include: ensuring local authorities and schools are clear about their roles in implementing parental involvement; that they have the

---

[7] Scottish Government. 2016. *National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education - achieving excellence and equity*. Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00491758.pdf [accessed 16/11/2016]

[8] Scottish Government. 2016. *Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education: A Delivery Plan for Scotland.* Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502222.pdf [accessed 16/11/2016]

support and information they need; and the need for the approaches they use to be informed by existing strategies and programmes which have proven to be successful.

The importance of ensuring key stakeholders (local authorities and their partners, school staff and parents) are clear about the importance of parental involvement in policies, such as the *Curriculum for Excellence* and school development plans, is highlighted by a number of sources[9]. These stress that in order for parental involvement strategies to be successful, local authorities need to be clear on the purpose and role of parental involvement when communicating with schools, and that it should be viewed as central, not peripheral, to the effectiveness of the work of schools. Further, schools and teachers need to be clear about their role in its implementation and work closely with pupils, Parent Councils, families and communities to draw attention to its importance and the "significant contribution [it makes] to closing the attainment gap"[10].

The research reviewed suggested that providing schools and parents with the support and information they need to engage effectively with each other is another key consideration for the implementation of successful parental involvement strategies. To be effective, it is recommended that schools are resourced properly, with the capacity to develop their strategy, and have the backing of engaged and committed senior staff[11]. Further, school staff should receive training through initial teacher training or continuing professional development[12]. In terms of support for parents, the Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC) review carried out in 2015, found that the level of support being provided to parents at a local authority level had "declined significantly" since 2006. They recommend that schools engage regularly with parents, by personal contact where possible, and do not view them as passive recipients of information but rather "partners with whom schools/authorities should work"[13]

Finally, a common issue highlighted by the literature was the lack of existing evidence available on the impact of different parental involvement strategies, including the 2006 Parental Involvement Act[14]. While it was recommended that effective strategies be based on existing evidence[15], it was felt that there was first the need to build an evidence base to identify what works[16].

Home school partnerships

The literature suggested that effective communication between schools and parents, and encouraging parental involvement in school activities are important factors towards building strong school parent relationships. Recent research provides recommendations for how schools can improve these relationships and help parents better understand how they can work in partnership with the school to support their children's learning.

As noted above, SPTC suggest that schools often treat parents as passive partners in their children's learning, who have little influence over the types of information they receive and when they receive it. Given the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence* and other recent changes in school teaching strategies, it was considered even more important to keep parents informed and provide information on how their learning will develop each year during the different stages of school (e.g. early years, primary and secondary)[17].

Although SPTC's findings show that the majority of parents think schools keep them well informed[18],research has identified certain groups of parents who can be excluded from school communications. Non-resident and ethnic minority parents often face difficulties in terms of the communications they may, or may not, receive from schools[19]. Non-resident parents can feel they lack equal parental status in the eyes of schools and are routinely kept 'out of the loop' in terms of communications from their child's school. Meanwhile, parents from ethnic minority backgrounds can face language barriers and a lack of confidence in communicating with their child's school.

Aston & Grayson's 2013 *Teacher Guide: Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children*, recommends that schools prioritise communication strategies with parents to ensure effective parental engagement. The guide states that this can be achieved through schools providing information that is clear, specific and accessible for different groups of parents, including targeted or translated information for ethnic minority parents; consulting regularly with parents; and providing a variety of opportunities for engagement, including one to one and group meetings, and through Information and Communication Technology[20]. Families Need Fathers recommended in their 2011 report, Equal Families , that schools should set up systems of communication to ensure that non-resident parents are equal partners in decision making with regards to their children's education[21].

[9] Aston, H. and Grayson, H. 2013. *Teacher Guide: Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children*. Slough and Oxford: NFER and Oxford University Press.

Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. 2014. *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

OECD. 2015. *Improving schools in Scotland: An OECD perspective*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

Prior, E. 2015. *Parliament Education Committee: Evidence re parental involvement and raising attainment*. SPTC. Available at: http://www.sptc.info/parental-involvement-and-raising-attainment-evidence-to-parliament-march-2015/ [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[10] Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education* (p24).

[11] Aston, H. and Grayson, H. *Teacher Guide* (p1).

[12] Goodall, J. Vorhaus, J., Carpentieri, J., Brooks, G., Rodie, A. and Harris, A. 2010. *Review of best practice in parental engagement*. London: Department for Education. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182508/DFE-RR156.pdf [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[13] Prior, E. *Parliament Education Committee: Evidence re parental involvement and raising attainment*. (p2).

[14] *Ibid* (p2).

[15] Aston, H. and Grayson, H. *Teacher Guide* (p1).

[16] Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education (p43).

[17] *Ibid* (p3)

NPFS. 2014. *Sharing Learning, Sharing Assessment: Report for Parents*. The National Parent Forum of Scotland. Available at: http://www.npfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Report.pdf [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[18] Scottish Parent Teacher Council. 2015. *Report for Members Survey 2014/2015*. SPTC. Available at: http://www.sptc.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Report-for-Member-survey-2015-V4.pdf [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[19] . Forsyth, J. 2011. *Equal Parents: Clearing the obstacles to involvement of non resident parents in their children's education*. Families Need Fathers Scotland. Available at: http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/861186/25877505/1429028774603/Equal+Parents+21+January+2015.pdf?token=a5t1IvamvZ7N8ZyqQROJzQo9Igk%3D [Accessed 16/11/2016].

Gathered Together. 2016. *Experiences of Parental Involvement Among Families from Ethnic Minorities*. Gathered Together. Available at: http://gatheredtogether.bemis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Experiences-of-Parents-from-Ethnic-Minorities-Report.pdf [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[20] Aston, H. and Grayson, H. *Teacher Guide* (p2).

[21] Forsyth, J. *Equal Parents* (p13).

In terms of parental involvement in school activities, a common barrier to involvement is parents' time commitments (such as work and childcare). Schools may not always be flexible in providing opportunities to be involved in activities, and parents' contact with the school is often limited to parents' evenings[22]. This is particularly common for parents of secondary school children. In comparison, primary schools tend to have more opportunities for interaction throughout the school year, such as parent teacher contact at the school gates, fairs, assemblies and concerts. As such, it is recommended that all schools provide regular opportunities for parents to engage in school activities. For example, regular open days and opportunities for parents to visit classrooms to meet teachers and find out more about their children's learning[23].

Learning at home

In order to help reduce the deprivation based attainment gap, parental involvement interventions focused on helping parents support their children's learning at home are thought to be among the most effective[24]. However, it is felt the support offered by Scottish schools may not always cater for the additional support needs of certain groups of parents, particularly for those from more deprived backgrounds[25]. In addition, parents may face barriers to involvement including a lack of confidence, a lack of familiarity and understanding of new systems of education (such as the *Curriculum for Excellence*), or, for minority ethnic parents, language and cultural barriers[26]. Other parents may not be aware of the extent to which, and the different ways, that they are able to actively support the school, and their children's learning[27].

SPTC recommend that any support should be based on evidence based, practical measures[28]. A 2010 UK Government review[29] of studies of interventions aimed at supporting and improving parental engagement in their children's education outlines a series of recommendations on how to engage parents in their children's learning. These include recommendations that engaging parents in their children's learning should be an integral part of a whole school approach to parental involvement and staff should receive support and training in order to be able to engage parents effectively. Parents too, should receive support and training, with programmes targeted towards specific groups who may be more likely to require support, such as those from more deprived backgrounds or ethnic minority parents. Further, parents should receive specific, detailed guidance on the programmes available and on their expected contribution to school life. Family and community based interventions, such as family literacy, language, numeracy programmes, adult learning as a referral route are thought to be particularly effective.

Several examples of Scottish programmes, aimed at promoting positive and effective parental involvement in children's learning, were identified. The Family and Schools Together (FAST) programme, carried out from 2010 to 2014 across 17 local authorities in Scotland, is an early intervention programme for primary school-age pupils which works to improve children's ability to learn by strengthening their home learning environment. An evaluation of the FAST programme[30] found it to be a highly effective approach at promoting positive parental involvement, which improved the outcomes for parents, families and teachers. It was found to work best when closely aligned to the parental involvement strategies of local authorities and schools.

Other examples of Scottish approaches are identified in case studies carried out by Education Scotland on family learning in two local authorities – Perth and Kinross and West Dunbartonshire[31]. The case studies evaluated a range of programmes aimed at promoting family learning, such as literacy groups, parenting skills classes, parent and child homework clubs, family learning clubs and family support hubs. As a result of these programmes, both councils identified outcomes such as improvements to parents' overall confidence, their literacy, language and numeracy skills and ability to help their children learn. For children, improvements were identified to their acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy. Further, these programmes enabled parents to access further information and services to help them with areas they identified they wanted support in. For example, parenting, training and development for employability and their own educational attainment.

Parental Representation

Literature on parental representation and the work and impact of Parent Councils in Scotland is limited at present. In 2013, the Scottish Government published its Parent Council Resource[32], highlighting the importance of gathering the views of parents and providing advice for Parent Councils on how to effectively consult with parents. However, research highlights that the views of parents from certain backgrounds can be excluded[33]. Ethnic minority parents are often under-represented in Parent Councils, for reasons such as a lack of awareness of the work of Parent Councils, a lack of confidence, or a feeling that Parent Councils are 'not for them.' Meanwhile, it is felt that non-resident parents can be excluded from school communications and may therefore have limited opportunities for their views to be heard.

[22] Prior, E. *Parliament Education Committee: Evidence re parental involvement and raising attainment.* (p3); Gathered Together. *Experiences of Parental Involvement* (p2).

[23] Aston, H. and Grayson, H. *Teacher Guide* (p2);

NPFS. *Sharing Learning, Sharing Assessment* (p5).

[24] Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education* (p3).

[25] Prior, E. *Parliament Education Committee: Evidence re parental involvement and raising attainment.* (p4).

[26] NPFS. *Sharing Learning, Sharing Assessment* (p3)

Gathered Together. *Experiences of Parental Involvement* (p10).

[27] TNS. 2015. *Read, Write, Count: Exploring parental educational engagement.* Edinburgh: Scottish Government.,

[28] Prior, E. *Parliament Education Committee: Evidence re parental involvement and raising attainment.* (p4).

[29] Goodall e al. *Review of best practice in parental engagement.*

[30] Chapman, C., Friel, N., Hall, S., Lowden, K., Njiriani, N. and Watters, N. 2015. *FAST Forward: Families Engagement in Children's Learning – Findings from Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme in Scotland.* University of Glasgow for Save the Children. Available at: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/FAST_Forward_0.pdf [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[31] Education Scotland. 2013. *Family learning in Perth and Kinross: A local authority case study.* Available at: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/ [Accessed 16/11/2016]

Education Scotland. 2013. *Family learning in West Dunbartonshire: A local authority case study.* Available at: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/f [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[32] Scottish Government. 2013. *Parent Council Resource: A guide to gathering views and ensuring parents' voices are heard in your school.* Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0041/00417289.pdf [Accessed 16/11/2016].

[33] Forsyth, J. *Equal Parents*; Gathered Together. *Experiences of Parental Involvement.*

4. Local authority parental strategies

Summary of key points

- **Substantial variation between the approaches of the different local authorities were found in terms of the publically available documentation and information related to parental involvement.**

- **Twenty-three strategies were available online, a further six were made available on request. However, we were unable to find a parental involvement strategy, or contact the Parental Involvement Officer, for three local authorities. Only six were easily accessible (e.g. clearly linked from schools/education/parents' pages on the local authority website).**

- **Very few of the local authority strategies were up-to-date, had details of how/when they would be reviewed, had evidence of parent consultation. However, of the 29 that were available, all followed the 2006 parental involvement guidelines.**

The Act states that every local authority should:

- prepare a strategy setting out their policies on parental involvement which must cover their duties under the Act

- take account of the views of interested parties (including parents) when developing or reviewing a strategy

- involve parents with differing experiences to ensure the strategy reflects the broad parental view

- take equal opportunities into account when developing strategy.

This chapter explores to what extent this has been achieved and also looks at some of the viewpoints of parents and staff in relation to the local authority parental strategies. As stated in the methodology, the review of parental involvement strategies was carried out through desk research. Therefore, it is important to note that the mapping exercise was bounded in scope – the research covered the material that was available on online, in addition to any information provided from a follow up email with the parental involvement officer for each local authority. It is important to note that the fact that the research team were not able to identify a local authority's strategy does not necessarily mean that it does not exist. However, it does provide a picture of what is easily available parents as well as other interested parties.

The review focused a series of eight key questions:

1. Is the strategy online (or in another form) and accessible to parents?

2. When was the strategy last updated/reviewed?

3. Is there any evidence of the strategy being informed by research/consultation with parents and carers?

4. Does the strategy use the 2006 guidance?

5. Strategy differentiates between involvement in the life of school/involvement in learning activities?

6. Does the strategy have clear, measurable aims, objectives and outputs?

7. Is there any evidence of progress/development since the last strategy?

8. Is the strategy interlinked with, or embedded in other local authority strategies?

Is the strategy online (or in another form) and accessible to parents?

Parental involvement strategies were available online for 23 local authorities. The parental involvement officer (PIO) in areas for which a strategy was not available were contacted and a further six areas provided the strategy on request. However, we were unable to find a parental involvement strategy, or contact the PIO, for three local authorities. This means that the remaining elements of the strategy mapping will cover the 29 we were able to identify.

While we were able to identify parental involvement strategies for the majority of local authorities, for the most part these were not straightforward to locate. Of the 23 parental involvement strategies that were available online, only six were easily accessible (e.g. clearly linked from schools/education/parent pages on the local authority website). This means that for parents to access the information would also be very difficult.

Furthermore, if parents were able to find the documentation, the majority were only available as policy documentation written in a style that is not necessarily accessible to all parents. Only five local authorities provided a summary leaflet or document that was written in a more accessible manner and specifically aimed at parents.

When was the strategy last updated/reviewed?

It was clear that although most local authorities had a parental involvement strategy, a substantial number had not been updated since their original drafting. It should be noted that it may be the case that the document had been updated but was not made available online.

The table below provides information on when the available strategies are due to be reviewed.

Table 4.1 Parental involvement strategies by review year

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of strategies due to be reviewed	3	2	4	3	1	2	1	2	1	5	4

Only nine of the local authority parental involvement strategies were up-to-date at the time of the mapping exercise.

Is there evidence of the strategy being informed by research/consultation with parents and carers?

There was only limited evidence that parents and carers were involved in the creation of the strategy documents. In eleven of the local authorities we were able to find evidence that parents have been consulted in some form. However, this was often through the Parent Council or a working group, rather than with a wider, more representative group of parents.

In total six local authorities appeared to have conducted a full consultation into parent views on the strategy – although a number of these were not recent.

Does the strategy use the 2006 guidance?

In terms of the substantive content of the local authority parental involvement strategies, all followed the 2006 guidance.

Does the strategy differentiate between involvement in the life of school / involvement in learning activities?

Most of the strategies did differentiate between the life of the school and involvement in learning activities using the three key concepts laid out in the Act's guidance: Home-School partnership, Learning at Home and Parental representation. However, four did not.

Does the strategy have clear, measurable aims objectives and outputs?

Providing clear aims and objectives for the strategy was not common in the strategies we were able to identify. Of the 29 available, only four have clear, measurable aims and objectives specific to the strategy outlined, a further three had linked the strategy to outcomes in Education Scotland's *How good is our school?* Framework.

Is there any evidence of progress/development since the last strategy?

As discussed above, very few of the strategies were up-to-date, had been informed by parent and carer consultation or included specific aims and objectives.

This meant that any evidence of progress/development to the strategies was difficult to identify. It is important to note that although there was no evidence of development, that does not necessarily mean that none had taken place.

Four local authorities provided information on aspects of the strategy that had been changed in light of a review of documentation and/or parent consultation. One further local authority made reference to 'monitoring' the policy but did not provide information on how this would be done.

Is the strategy interlinked with, or embedded in other local authority strategies?

There was little evidence of the parental involvement strategies being embedded in other local authority or national strategies. That said, 14 local authorities did link to other strategies, most commonly national strategies

and policies such as GIRFEC and *Curriculum for Excellence*. However, there was little consistency in the links mentioned. For instance, while one local authority linked the strategy to three other policies, another linked it to 12.

Areas for further consideration

Further consideration should be given to improving the consistency of local authority parental involvement strategies. Improvements could be made in four key areas:

- **More regular review and monitoring of the Parental Involvement Strategy**

- **Parental Involvement Strategy to contain clear, measurable aims to ensure progress can be assessed in accordance with the requirements within the National Improvement Framework and the Delivery Plan for Scottish Education**

- **Parental Involvement Strategy to be easily accessible online to parents**

- **Strategies to be available in a format that is easily understandable to all parents, free from jargon and technical language.**

5. Home/school partnership – communication

> **Summary of key points**
> - In general, parents were fairly satisfied with the type and level of communication they received from their child's school
> - There has been a clear move towards modern communication methods and parents were generally positive about this – but there were some reservations about the use of social media in particular
> - There was concern that moving too quickly to new technology would leave some parents falling behind
> - Parents preferred the school to contact them directly rather than having to seek out information themselves
> - Use of email or text to signpost to other more in-depth information was thought to be helpful
> - Parents would welcome more information on the topics their child is learning in advance
> - Parents felt schools were not consulting as much as they should or if they did it was after something had happened rather than beforehand. However, schools found that any attempts at consultation were not widely taken up by parents.

Introduction

The Parental Involvement Act (2006) highlights that there is a shared role between parents, schools and local communities to educate children and create a learning community where parents are involved in all decisions affecting their children's education.

It is recognised that successful partnerships include and combine a number of factors including: parents feeling welcome at their child's school; opportunities for parents to get involved at the school; flexibility to accommodate parents' existing family and work commitments; and teachers working to build relationships with parents on a daily basis.[34]

The next two chapters consider the strengths and weaknesses of the home-school partnership. The first chapter explores communication between parents and schools in facilitating partnerships, and the second looks at the ways in which parents are directly involved with school activities. In each chapter, areas where partnerships are working well and where further development may be needed, will be identified.

It is important to note that in this chapter we refer to parental involvement, not parental engagement. Since the Act in 2006, the literature around parental involvement has moved on and the terminology 'parental engagement' is now seen as best practice. However, the scope of this research was to review the impact of the 2006 Act and

therefore the focus remains on parental involvement. That said, there are instances where participants referred to parental engagement and we have reported their comments as spoken.

Methods of communication

Overall, parents were fairly happy with the level and types of communication they were receiving from their child's school. Schools were using a variety of communications methods tailored to different types of information and different audiences. It was clear from both the head teacher and parent interviews that there has been a shift towards modern communication methods and schools are increasingly using digital tools to effectively communicate with parents, for example through email, education apps, blogs, and social media.

I think we have to say that teachers are very good and they are very forward thinking, in my opinion, and they are doing their very best for the school… They are forward thinking,… we get texts just now, but they're looking at different technology.

(Member of Parent Council, case study 1)

Parents felt that the key benefit of newer technologies was that they provided them with a greater insight into school-life and the activities their children undertook on any given day. Furthermore, use of apps and social media accounts meant that it was easier to show members of the family, such as grandparents, what children had been doing at school and the topics they were learning about.

However, there was an issue of consistency within schools that used these technologies as teachers made use of the digital methods available to them to a varying extent. While parents acknowledged that this was inevitable as different individuals have varied levels of experience, and comfort, with using apps and social media, it meant that the quality of information they received about their child's learning activities could change from year to year.

While parents generally approved of schools 'moving with the times', there was some disagreement around the use of social media. Those who thought it was a good way for schools to communicate praised the creative ways that schools could use such applications (for example, posting live videos from the classroom). In addition, they felt it was convenient to access and could provide 'real-time insight' into what their children were doing during the day. This meant that they had a basis for instigating conversations at home with their child about what they were learning.

The teacher has a very, very, strong Twitter feed and that gives you as a parent information before you go home and have that conversation. What did you do at school today? Which by that time they're tired and their focus is starting to go... If you can walk in and say, oh, I see you did this at school.

(Member of Parent Council, case study 3)

However, there were other parents who were not as comfortable with the use of social media as a means for communications. This stemmed from two main concerns. Some parents held generally negative attitudes towards social media, particularly in terms of cyber-safety – they personally did not use it and had no intention of joining sites in order to communicate with their child's school. For other parents, it was not that they did not want to use social media but that they did not have experience of using it and did not feel confident in doing so.

---

[34] http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/147410/0038822.pdf

A lot of people were asking for Facebook, but it opens up a whole can of worms, and I'm glad of the decision, I don't want to be using, I don't think it's safe

(Member of Parent Council, case study 1)

In two of the case studies, apps such as Edmodo and mySchoolApp were also being used or were in the process of being introduced. Head teachers and Parent Council members felt that these apps were very useful as a tool to encourage parental involvement. This was because parents could have easy and instant access to the work that their child was undertaking and meant that any future discussions between the school and the parent, whether at a parents' evening or in a more informal setting, could take place with the parent in a place of knowledge about their child's learning.

I think this app will… help with engagement…because even though they're not coming up to the door they can always press a button and have a wee look and see what's happening.

(Member of Parent Council, case study 1)

One of the consequences of schools moving towards digital methods of communication is that they are moving away from more traditional methods, such as letters in the school bag. There was concern from some parents that the move towards digital technologies could leave some parents behind, because they either did not have the digital skills or did not have access to the internet or a computer at home. It was, therefore, suggested that the letter home should not be abandoned altogether. This was supported by the survey results which showed that a quarter of parents (25%), still preferred letters sent home with their child over other communication methods. (Figure 5.1).

Direct versus indirect information sources

The survey found that parents generally preferred schools to communicate through direct forms of contact such as emails, letters and text message, rather than providing information in a format that they would have to seek out. Parents often attributed this to a lack of time on their part, but did not express a particular desire for greater amounts of information.

Figure 5.1 shows the ways in which parents usually receive information from schools and also their preferred methods. Parents most commonly receive information by letters sent home (53%), email (38%) or text (31%) and were also more likely to prefer these methods.

Figure 5.1 How parents usually receive communications from schools, versus parents' preferred methods of communication
Q. How do you usually receive information, if at all, from your child's school? And Q. And how do you prefer to receive information from your child's school?
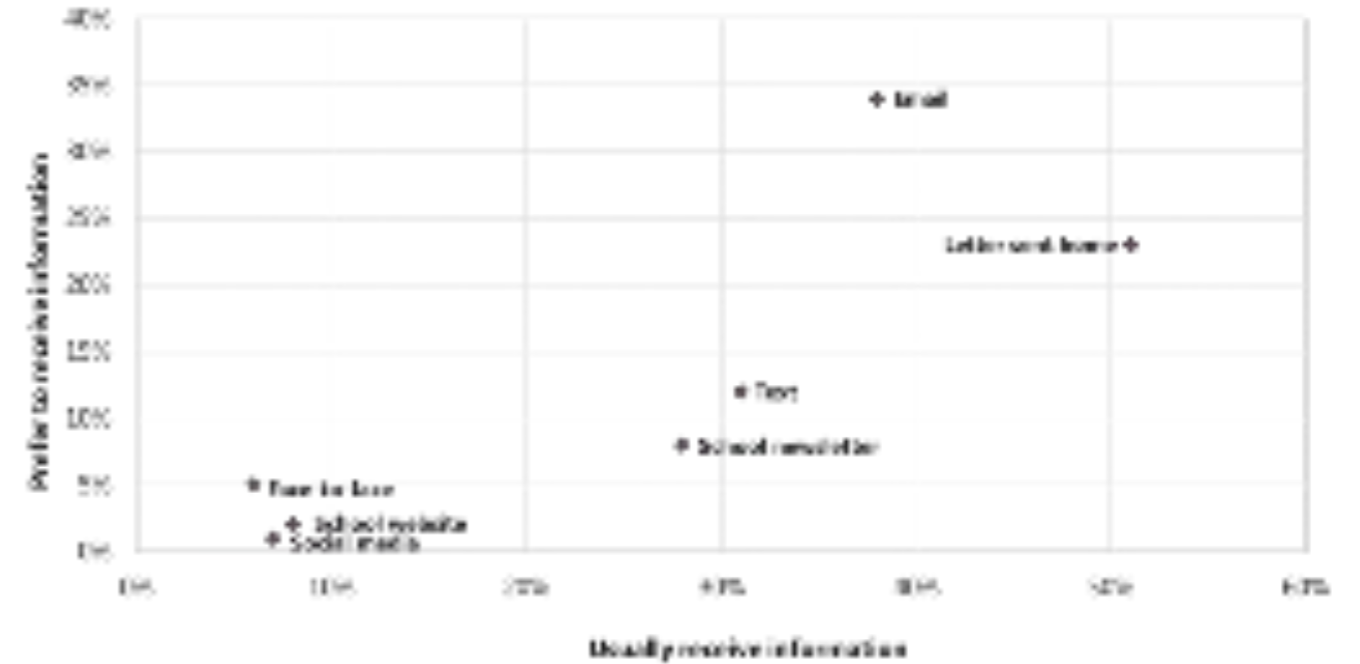
Base: all

The qualitative research also reflected this preference for the school to actively contact them. Parents said they preferred direct methods of communication due to the convenience, they did not want to have to seek out information if it could be sent to them.

It was common for them to speak positively of schools' use of email and/or text to signpost them to more in-depth information when it became available (for example, information on school pictures or uniforms, blogs or newsletters). Not only did this alert them to information they might need, it meant that a link to the information was always available on their phone to go back and read again, if required.

The text does work, I mean … they text you about everything and anything, which is great, like dress down day and stuff. Maybe like parent's night is next week. So, they are good here I must admit, to remind you about things.

(Member of Parent Council, case study 1)

I think it's essential that we have that email...or else nobody would use the website apart from when it comes to, oh, what's the school uniform thing again, or what's the procedure for this.

(Parent, case study 3)

Frequency and purpose of communication

The survey results suggested that schools are communicating information to parents on a regular basis. However, this differed to some extent by the type of information provided.

Schools were very good at communicating general information about the school, with 91% of parents receiving such information at least once a term and two thirds (66%) receiving general school information at least once a month (Figure 5.2).

Information about how children are progressing at school was also fairly frequent, the survey found that over three quarters of parents (78%) receive such information on at least a termly basis (86% of those with primary school children and 72% of those with secondary aged children). This was reflected in the qualitative case studies as well with both head teachers and parents stating that parents' evenings and reports/report cards occurred at least twice per school year, with some schools providing more regular feedback through homework diaries (whether on paper or through an app) which provided a 'daily link' between teachers and parents.

"f you've got a concern about homework or something like that, you can stick it in the diary and the child knows the teacher will look at their diary on a daily basis.

(Parent, case study 2)

However, parents would like to receive more information on their child's learning as some felt that this was lacking. The survey found that just under two-thirds of parents (61%) received this information at least once a term, and that 15% never receive such information.

Figure 5.2 Frequency of receiving information from their child's school
Q. How often, if at all does the school get in touch with you about the following?
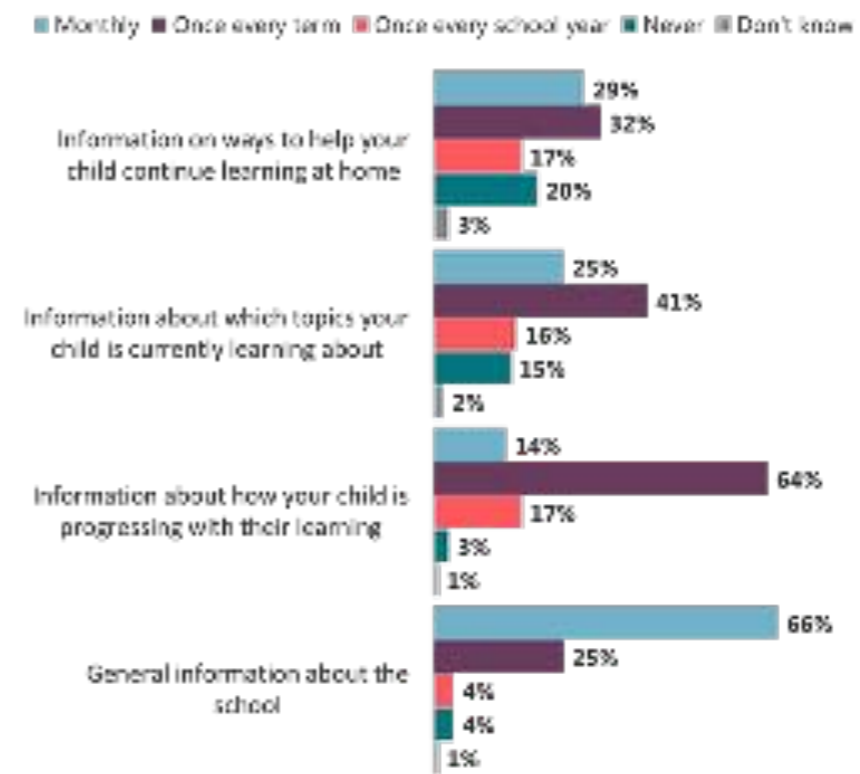
Base: all

Providing feedback to the school

Overall, the survey found that parents would rather speak to someone directly when feeding back to the school. Almost a third (32%) of parents said that they would speak to the class teacher and almost a fifth (19%) to the head teacher.

Schools were, to some extent, inviting feedback from parents, in the form of annual surveys, a feedback box, consultations and focus groups. The success of these varied between case studies, with case study 2 receiving a high response rate to their annual survey and case study 4 receiving only minimal response to their consultation, survey and focus groups.

Parents felt that this was an area that the schools could improve upon. Any consultation tended to be after an event. So they might be consulted about something but after the change had been made, there was interest in having information about school decisions earlier in the process.

Difficulties and limitations

Although schools are communicating with parents in a variety of ways and are embracing new digital tools to do so, they still face barriers which limit the degree to which they can effectively communicate with the wider parent forum.

Awareness and availability

In the qualitative research, parents were not always aware of all communication methods available to them, despite schools using a wide variety of methods and tools to communicate. Parents were most aware of communications sent directly to them, such as letters, emails and texts, but are less aware of methods they had to seek out and less traditional methods such as apps, blogs and social media.

For example, although one case study used many digital methods including Edmodo and mySchoolApp to communicate information to their parents, not all of the parents from the school were aware of these. The head teachers thought that the Edmodo app was a useful tool for students, staff *and* parents, however parents viewed this tool for students and staff only.

In another case study, the school has a section on their website where parents can view what their children are doing at school, with class teachers posting pictures from class activities, yet not all parents were aware that this is available to them despite indicating that this is something they would be interested in.

Another area of uncertainty for parents was not knowing exactly who to contact about a specific issue, or not being familiar with their child's teacher(s). Again, this was more of a problem for secondary school parents whose children have multiple subject class teachers, a form teacher and a guidance teacher.

I don't know who my daughter's what do you call them?... Guidance is, and I think if we're having parent's night they should be involved, because if I've got a general issue with my daughter it's not a specific teacher problem… But, I don't know how to, I don't even know who it is.

(Parent, case study 3)

The use of jargon

Parents highlighted the issue that some of the more formal communications from schools can be difficult to understand due to the use of jargon and terms they are unfamiliar with. This was mostly found in progress reports or curriculum reports. That said, the schools were aware of this and were making efforts to familiarise parents with the language used (e.g. through a glossary) or avoid the use of jargon in communications (e.g. by making communications more visual).

Technical barriers

Although parents like receiving text messages from schools, the 'group call' method is seen by some as unreliable, as both parents and staff reported parents do not always receive these messages. This meant that parents missed important communication or reminders sent to them from the school.

In addition, this and other school administrative functions (e.g. SEEMiS), only allow for one mobile number or one email address to be collected, limiting the potential for both mothers and fathers to receive direct communication by email or text message from the school. This is a particular issue for families where parents have separated and

one is non-resident. A further consequence of this is that the school only develops a strong home/school partnership with one parent.

Language barriers

Head teachers said that they provide additional support for parents who have English as an additional language (EAL) and may not be fluent in either reading, speaking or writing in English. In the two case studies where they had such families, the school arranged translations of direct communications such as letters and emails (although through informal methods). However, there were still limitations around indirect methods of communication, such as the school website and social media, which were not translated. Education apps such as mySchoolApp do offer a free service whereby app content can be made available to EAL parents in more than 80 languages. However, this did not appear to be in use by any of the schools within the case studies.

> **Areas for further consideration**
>
> While schools should continue to embrace new technology, they should consider retaining other more traditional options for those parents who prefer them.
>
> Increase consultation opportunities for the parent forum as a whole.
>
> Raise awareness of methods of communication available to parents through the school.
>
> Increase the amount of information available on children's learning.
>
> In secondary schools, provide clarity over who parents should approach (e.g. guidance teacher) if they have an issue they wish to discuss.

6. Home/school partnership – parental involvement in school life

Summary of key points

Creating a welcoming environment for parents was a key goal for the case study schools. However, they felt that parental involvement lessened as children progress through the education system.

Parents felt more comfortable getting involved in wider school activities than learning activities with the most common interaction through traditional opportunities such as parents' evenings and events such as school plays and concerts. There was a notable difference between parents in the primary and secondary sectors. Those with children at primary school were much more likely to get involved with the life of the school than those with children in the secondary sector.

Schools were making opportunities available to parents to get involved but these opportunities were not always taken up, particularly those focused on learning and teaching (rather than social or fundraising events).

There were several reasons for limited involvement from parents. These included:

- Potentially disadvantaged groups (e.g. those with low levels of literacy, those from a deprived background, those with a mental health condition) often had negative experiences of education which discouraged them from getting involved with the school

- A lack of time due to work commitments, childcare responsibilities or other family commitments

- Non-residents parents are not always provided with information about the opportunities available to them

- A lack of awareness of the opportunities available to parents.

Introduction

The Parental Involvement Act (2006) states that in order to develop a successful home-school partnership, schools should aim to make parents feel welcome within the school gates and provide varied and flexible opportunities for them to get involved with school life and activities.

Overall, there were more opportunities available to parents with primary school aged children compared with those with children in secondary school. Differences in levels of parental involvement by school sector was a general trend throughout the research and will be discussed at the appropriate points in this chapter.

While there was evidence of many effective initiatives to encourage parental involvement in place, both schools and parents still face challenges when creating a partnership in which parents are involved in school life.

Creating a welcoming environment for parents

Head teachers saw the importance of creating a welcoming environment for parents in order to encourage involvement and build relationships. Creating a welcoming environment was, therefore, a key goal for head teachers and they did this by:

- having an 'open door policy'

- encouraging class teachers to be welcoming to parents

- welcoming the views of parents when they express them

- getting to know parents by name (at primary school level)

- accommodating different families' needs (for example if they are separated or have additional learning or language needs)

- having specific areas or rooms dedicated to parents, if they need to come in and speak to the school (primary school).

Head teachers felt that parental involvement lessens as children progress though school. Parental involvement is common in the early years, but when children move into primary school parents often see the school gates as a barrier which makes the school a more closed educational environment. Head teachers also commented that as pupils move into secondary school this becomes even more prominent.

We have tried to wider replicate .... what parental engagement has looked like in the pre-five sector.... We tend to find that parents have a very fluid and open engagement with the pre-five establishments, but when the children come to school parents can sometimes view the school differently, and see a primary school perhaps as being a busier establishment and they don't come into the building as often as they would if their child was at a pre-five establishment... and then that distancing becomes more profound when the children move into high school.

(Head teacher, case study 2)

Parents agreed that they felt welcome when they visited the school and were happy to do so, this mostly occurred at parent's evenings and school events such as plays and prize giving's.

In the survey, most parents said that they were comfortable getting involved with activities at their child's school (Figure 6.1) which suggests head teachers has succeeded in creating a welcoming environment. However, parents were more comfortable getting involved with wider school activities rather than learning activities (78% felt comfortable getting involved in wider school activities, compared with 69% in learning activities).

Fathers were more likely than mothers to feel uncomfortable attending wider social activities (14% of fathers felt uncomfortable, compared with 6% of mothers). In keeping with the general trend of lower involvement in the secondary sector, those who have a child at secondary school were more uncomfortable than those with a child in primary (12% versus 6%).

Figure 6.1 How comfortable or uncomfortable parents are at getting involved with learning activities and wider activities, at their child's school
Q. How comfortable or uncomfortable do you feel about getting involved… with learning activities at your child's school, for example: paired reading, helping in the classroom or with after school clubs/with wider school activities, for example: helping with school trips or social events, attending school plays or performances?
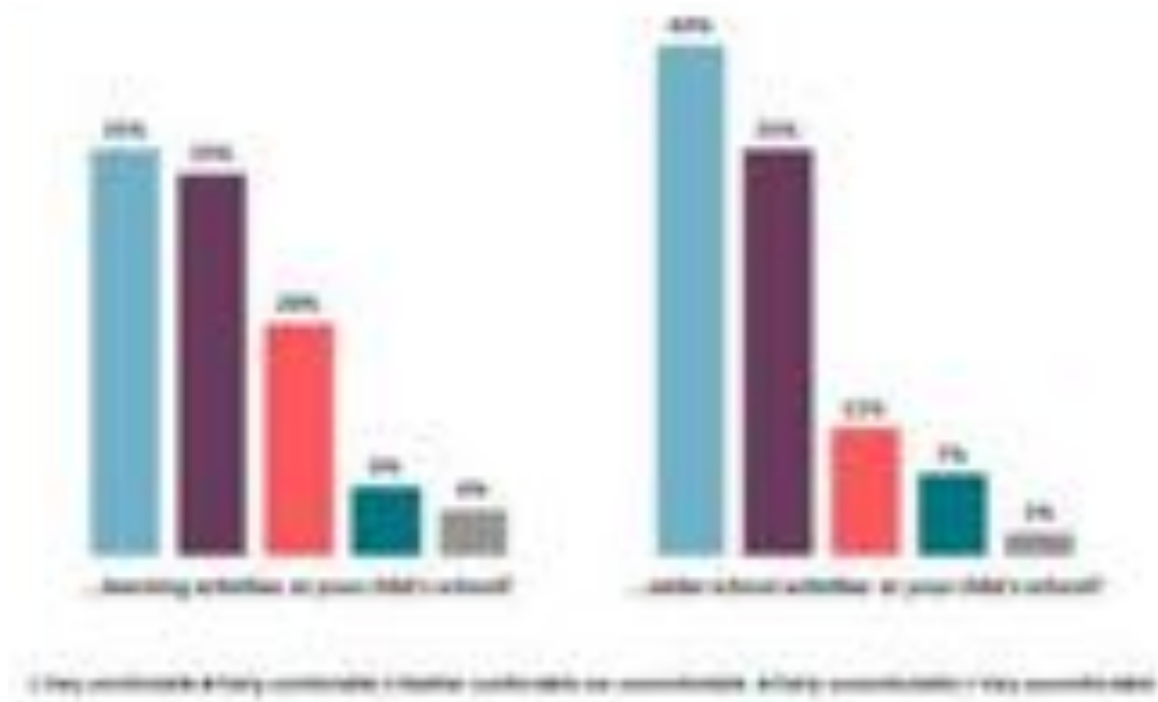
Base: all

Opportunities available to parents

Head teachers felt they are providing opportunities for parents to get involved with school life and therefore directly or indirectly involved with their child's education. The research found that the activities available have different purposes, from getting involved with social events, to activities based around supporting their child's learning needs. Some of the these were:

- attending or helping social fundraising or social events (mostly organised through Parent Councils)

- school walk-arounds

- volunteering to help with discos, school trips or other out of school activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award

- attending learning events on topics such as numeracy or the curriculum

- attending safety/information seminars (for example on child online safety)

- reading activities, including Book Bug, Book Bite and a Blether and Accelerated reading.

While parents were aware of some of the opportunities available at their school, it was rare for parents to know about every single thing that the school was doing to encourage parents to become more involved in their child's learning.

Parents' involvement and attendance at school events

Traditional opportunities for parents to get involved with the school such as parents' evenings and events such as school plays and concerts were thought by head teachers, parents and Parent Councils to be the most commonly attended events, along with meetings on education and learning in secondary schools, as these were seen to be more compulsory.

Findings from the survey also supported this: 93% of parents had attended 'a one-to-one meeting with a teacher to discuss their child's learning, for example parents evening etc.' and 84% of parents had attended school events such as concerts, plays or sports days.

Although these two types of events were also the most commonly attended for parents of secondary school children, they were not as highly attended compared to primary school parents (Figure 6.2).

Overall, there is a notable difference between how involved primary and secondary school parents are, with primary parents attending activities at the school more frequently than secondary school parents. In the last school year, primary parents were more likely to have attended or helped out at events than secondary school parents. The most notable of these being the number of parents who had: attended an open afternoon (61% primary parents compared with 25% secondary parents); attended a school fundraising event (82% of primary parents compared with 46% of secondary) and helping out at school activities such as trips or school discos or proms (45% of primary parents compared with 13% of secondary parents).

Figure 6.2 Proportion of parents who have done or attended any of the following, by primary/secondary school
Q. Within the last school year, have you done any of the following at your child's school?
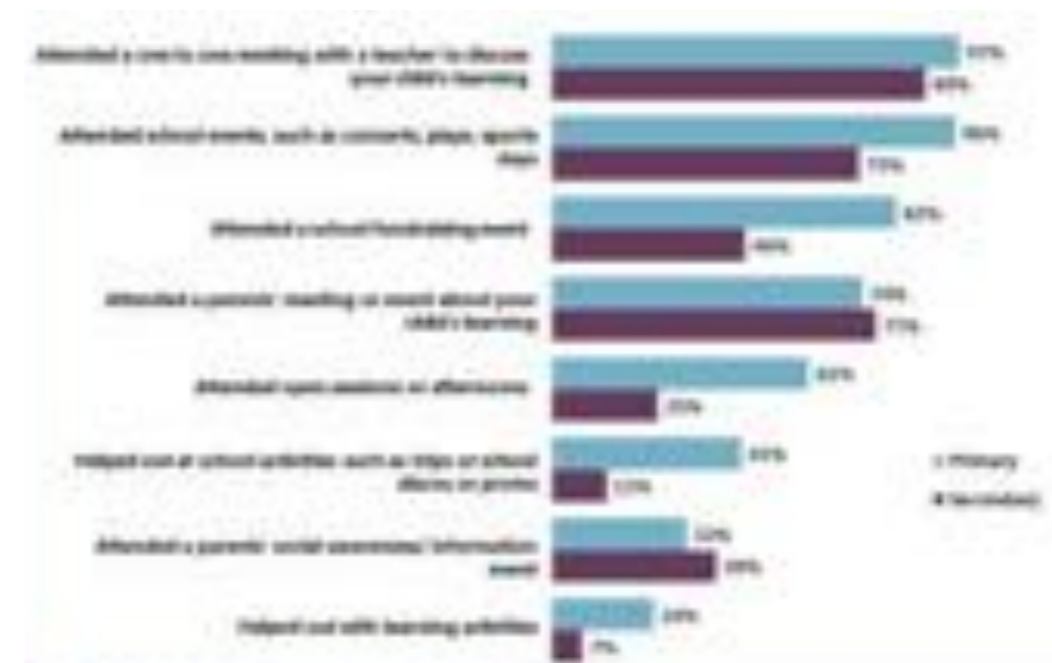
Certain groups of parents were less likely to get involved with some of the activities than other groups, including fathers more so than mothers, parents working full time compared with those working part time and parents from lower socio-economic classification in comparison with those from higher socio-economic classification (Table 6.1).

In the case studies, although parents working part-time found it difficult to attend around their work schedules or shifts, they were largely able to attend most of the activities they wanted to if they had enough advanced warning in order to plan for this. One parent described how if she or the child's father could not attend an activity during working hours, then they could arrange for the grandparents to do so.

Base: all primary (254), all secondary (248)

Table 6.1 Percentage of parents who had attended/helped out at the activities listed, in the last school year, by gender, employment status and social grade

	Overall	Gender		Employment			Socio-economic classification		
		Male	Female	Full-time	Part-time	Not working	ABs	C1C2s	DEs
Base:	502	184	318	299	151	50*	107	285	100
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Attended a one to one meeting with a teacher to discuss your child's learning	93	90	95	92	96	92	93	94	91
Attended open sessions or afternoons	43	34	48	38	49	52	48	41	44
Attended a school fundraising event	64	58	66	61	71	64	66	64	61
Helped out at school activities such as trips or school discos or proms	29	22	33	24	36	38	34	27	30
Attended a parent's social awareness/ information event	35	33	37	31	40	42	41	35	30
Attended a parents meeting or event about your child's learning	84	81	86	82	89	86	92	83	81
Attended school events, such as concerts, plays, sports days.	76	72	78	74	77	80	77	75	75
Helped out with learning activities	15	14	16	13	18	22	20	15	10

Parent Council members

A further key variation was between parents who *are* members of the Parent Council and parents who are *not* members. Parent Council members were more likely than non-members to have done *all* of the listed activities in Table 6.1, in the last year, with the exception of attending a parents' meeting or event about a child's learning.

The case studies also found that Parent Council members were very involved in the various opportunities for parental involvement provided by the school, as well as those provided by the Parent Council themselves, including social or fundraising events. They were fully informed and aware of the opportunities available to them. Primary council members understood that their interest in these activities, in turn made their children more interested in events and other ways to get involved with the school, outside of their classroom.

Issues preventing involvement

Despite the various opportunities available to parents, not all of them were taking these up. Some of the schools found that engaging parents with activities and events at the school was challenging, especially for activities on learning or teaching. Head teachers and Parent Council members noted that it is often the same people attending wider activities at the school and as the survey found, often, the same 'type' of parents *not* attending (Table 6.1).

Reasons for limited or a lack of involvement varied, but included the following:

- potentially disadvantaged parents

- a lack of time

- employment commitments

- parental awareness of the opportunities available

- not feeling comfortable with the school environment

- negative experiences of education

The next sections go on to discuss each of these in more detail.

Potentially disadvantaged parents

Schools found parents from deprived backgrounds the most difficult to involve in school life. Head teachers and Parent Council members noted that commonly parents from deprived backgrounds or 'potentially disadvantaged parents' (such as those with low literacy, from deprived backgrounds or with a mental health condition, for example) do not get involved as much as other parents, if at all. This was especially so for events or activities aimed at developing their child's learning, although head teachers and Parent Council members stated that these parents and children are the ones who would benefit by engaging with school activities.

"The biggest thing we have to overcome is engaging with hard to reach parents and often the hard to reach parents are parents of children who would benefit most from that engagement… we know that if we could do that we could improve outcomes for those children, but we do find it difficult to reach some of our families."

The survey findings support this further, with those in lower socio-economic classifications being more likely to *not* attend school events such as concerts, plays or sports days (19% of those in lower socio-economic classifications, compared with 8% of those in the highest socio-economic classifications); wider school activities that most parents said they had attended (Table 6.1)

It was suggested that the reason *some* of the 'potentially disadvantaged' parents may be difficult to involve in school life, is if they have had negative experiences of schools and education themselves. In some cases, it was also thought that this may be heightened for parents who also have low literacy levels, due to a concern that they would "get found out," especially if they were to attend events to help their child with reading or numeracy, for example.

A barrier for a parent can be that they're going to get found out that they're not as literate or numerate as they should be.

Lack of time and parents' employment commitments

Parents saw time as the main barrier to greater involvement in the life of their child's school. Busy working lives, having young children or children at different schools were just some of the challenges that parents faced when trying to find time to get involved with wider school activities.

As already highlighted, the survey found that parents working full-time were less likely than those working part-time to attend certain activities at their child's school. This was particularly the case among those employed in shift work.

Parents and staff noted that parents need to be given sufficient advance notice of upcoming activities in order to maximise participation among parents. Parents at case study school 2 have recently seen the school communicate key dates with them much further in advance than in past school years, and this has been very beneficial; enabling working parents to arrange time off work to be able to attend.

The timing at which events and activities are held was also raised. Generally, the ideal time for secondary school parents would be evening, and for primary, at the same time as the school drop off and/or pick up time. It was noted by parents that events at primary schools in the middle of the working day proved difficult to attend, as this would involve in some cases a full day off work.

Parents surveyed mostly agreed that schools take the time commitment of parents into account (77%). Only 14% of parents disagreed that this was the case at their school (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 Whether parents think that the school takes their commitments into consideration when organising activities
Q. To what extend do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My child's school take the time commitments of parents into consideration when staff organise activities or meetings that parents may be invited to attend.
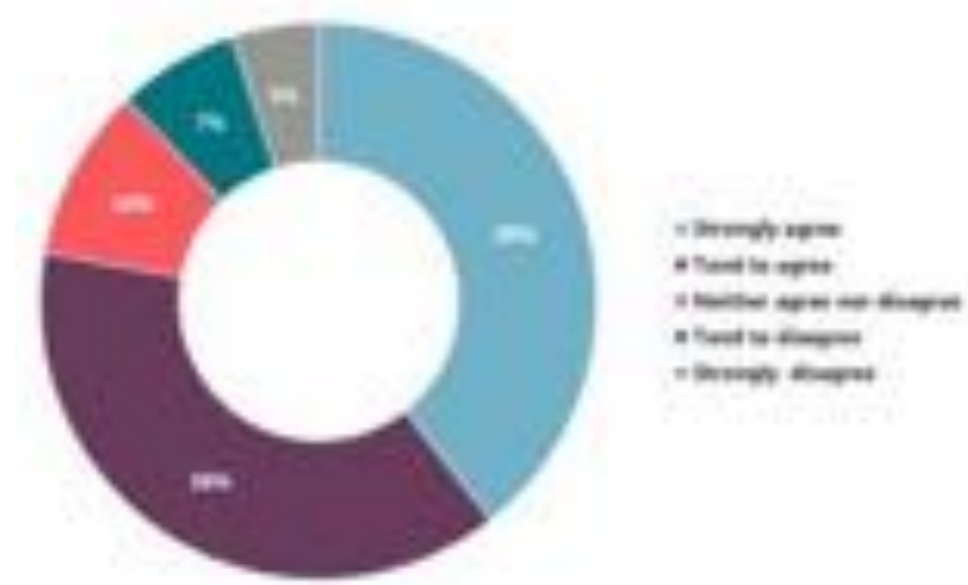
Base: all

Parent's lack of awareness of all of the opportunities available

Another issue preventing parental involvement was that not all parents were aware of all of the ways in which they could get involved at their child's school. Although parents are directly invited to events such as parents' evenings, direct communication was not used for all school activities. For some parents, this would be dependent on them seeing it in a school newsletter, school website or social media feed, which as highlighted in section 3, was not always the most effective way, for all parents.

A lack of communication between a school and a non-resident father in the research meant that he did not always get direct invites to events such as parents' evening and he was not always aware of other activities such as school discos or upcoming plays.

A balance between pupils independent learning and parental involvement at secondary school

As previously mentioned, parental involvement becomes less common as children progress into secondary school, with parents less likely to attend events and activities. An element of this is that pupils become more independent at this age, so it may be difficult for parents to find a balance or know what level of involvement is appropriate.

Areas for improvement

While schools generally felt that they are performing well, they still recognise that there are challenges. Areas for improvement were increasing parental involvement in the strategic planning of the school and working more closely with 'potentially disadvantaged' parents, with the overall aim of encouraging their participation and involvement.

Schools had conflicting ideas on how to approach these families. One of the case studies targeted 'potentially disadvantaged' families and directly invites them to learning activities or events at the school, which these families did attend. Whereas, another school avoided this direct approach as they felt it would isolate these families

further. Their view was that it is best to take a softer approach with these families, building relationships with them over time and gradually making them feel more comfortable with the school.

Areas for further consideration

Further thought should be given to increasing parental involvement in secondary schools – while still taking teacher workloads into account.

Schools should ensure that sufficient advance notice of events and activities is provided to maximise parent participation.

Schools should explore ways of making schools activities more accessible and flexible for working parents.

Further thought should be given to involving potentially disadvantaged groups in school life – although it should be recognised that there will not be a single solution that suits all parents.

7.   Learning at home

Summary of key points

Most parents, and to lesser extent Parent Council members, had limited knowledge of what learning at home meant in the context of the Parental Involvement Act (2006). For the most part, they discussed learning at home synonymously with homework, suggesting that the broader definition of learning at home adopted by the Act has not reached parents.

While there was understanding that it was beneficial for parents to become involved in their child's learning, there was some concern that if there was too much of a focus on learning at home it could widen the deprivation attainment gap for those children whose parents may be less inclined to support them at home or do not have the time to do so.

With the exception of one case study, learning at home was an area in which head teachers felt they could improve. As such more than one of the case studies had just reviewed, or were in the process of reviewing, their homework policies.

As with many other features of parental involvement, those with children in secondary school found it more difficult to support their child than those with children in primary school. It was common for parents to feel unsure about their ability to understand some of the work their child was doing as they got older.

As previously discussed, parents did not often mention other forms of learning activities outside of homework unless prompted. However, when they were discussed, some practical barriers were raised: financial constraints and a lack of public transport in rural areas.

Introduction

The Parental Involvement Act (2006) recognises the vital role that parents and other carers play in children's learning and development. Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and, as such, should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home and in the community.

In this chapter, we consider evidence from the parent survey and qualitative case studies on awareness and understanding of learning at home and the role parents think they have in supporting their child's learning at home. Later sections will cover the support that schools provide and the potential barriers that parents may face when supporting their child's learning at home.

Understanding of learning at home

Most parents, and to lesser extent Parent Council members, had limited knowledge of what learning at home meant in the context of the Parental Involvement Act (2006). For the most part, they discussed learning at home synonymously with homework, suggesting that the broader definition of learning at home adopted by the Act has

not reached parents. This meant that the main focus of discussion was on homework and other forms of learning at home were not considered by parents unless prompted.

However, there were a small number of parents that did mention wider learning activities such as cultural visits to museums and castles and shared hobbies including photography. This tended to be those who were on the Parent Council.

There were mixed views on the role that parents should play in learning at home. Some parents thought that they should be fully involved in their child's learning at home, a view particularly evident among primary parents. Their involvement at home was almost always with reference to supporting literacy and numeracy rather than helping with particular subjects. Others felt that their role was one of encouragement and support, ensuring that homework was completed but that actual help and support should come from the school. Although not exclusively, this was more common among parents with children in secondary school.

As previously mentioned, when discussing the role of the parent in learning at home, this was in reference to homework. Only one parent explicitly made the link between what their child was learning at school and their role in expanding on this beyond helping with homework.

This is something we all want to know, we all want to be involved and say, well you're studying this, well how does that relate to something we're doing at home? Actually we've just been to the museum did that tie in with anything you were doing?

(Parents, Case Study 3)

While there was understanding that it was beneficial for parents to become involved in their child's learning, there was some concern that if there was too much of a focus on learning *at home* it could widen the deprivation based attainment gap for those children whose parents may be less inclined to support them at home or do not have the time to do so.

Support provided by schools

With the exception of one case study, learning at home was an area in which HTs felt they could improve. As such more than one of the case studies had just reviewed, or were in the process of reviewing, their homework policies.

Support was offered in a variety of ways:

- Parents' evenings – head teachers felt that parent's evenings were the main avenue for discussing and encouraging learning at home. However, parents felt that these events could be too rushed to cover everything in detail, particularly if they had more than one child in school or for those with secondary school aged children. Head teachers also acknowledged that relying on this time could be problematic as the often the parents that need the most support did not attend.

- Website resources/blogs covering what children have been working on. Parents who used these resources found them to be extremely useful. However, as noted in the communication chapter, most parents were unaware that this was available to them and unlikely to actively seek out the information.

- Electronic homework diaries or apps – these were appreciated by some but parents felt that not all will be comfortable with newer methods or necessarily have a computer.

I think that's something parents have been asking a lot, because we want to be involved, we want to know, I mean, we can see some of the things that are up on the website what they're going to be studying. But, the homework diary because we can log into it and we can see what kind of homework they've got, what subjects they're doing, that's opening our doors.

(Parent Council, Case Study 4)

In the survey, views of the support provided for learning at home were generally positive, although more so among primary parents than secondary parents. There was a particular difference for two statements that the school encourages the parent to continue their child's learning at home in other ways than doing homework and that the school offers suitable support to help parents continue their child's learning at home.

Figure 7.1 School support for learning at home by school sector
Q. I'm now going to read out some statements. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.
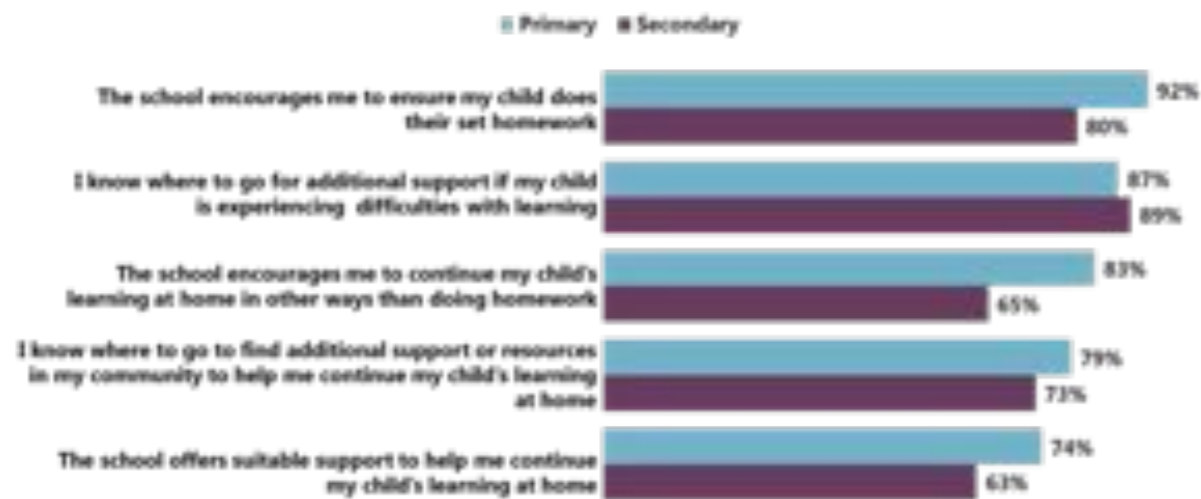
Base: All

The positive views from the survey were supported by the qualitative case studies to a large degree as some parents were happy with the resources provided.

My son is dyslexic and I get a lot of information from the school to go to things outside the school, like to learn, that's done by XXXX Council.

(Parent Council, Case Study 2)

We've got an accelerated reader programme that runs, every year parents are invited to come in to have information about that to actually have it explained how they accelerate reading, reader things going, to encourage you to read with your children, there is a lot of information that comes back.

(Parent Council, Case Study 3)

Furthermore, there were others that said they had to approach the school if they needed help but were perfectly happy to do so. Once they had contacted that school, they found that the response was swift and helpful.

If you have a problem with anything, you know you can pick up the phone and say, I don't know how to do this, help. There is someone there to help you. That's never been an issue, never.

(Parent Council, Case Study 1)

However, there were those who felt that the schools were not proactive enough in providing resources and support. There were two main elements to this. First, they did not think they knew enough about what their child was doing. Second, parents who required extra help as their child had a particular need e.g. dyslexia or advanced reading skills felt that they had to 'chase' schools to get the extra support they needed to help their child at home.

I think there could be more, and it's no criticism of this school but education in general, I think it would be a good idea for parents who wanted it, and it wouldn't be every parent that wanted to know what exactly the child is learning in say three months, six months, so that you can help, if you want to help the child.

I had to go seek out that teacher to say 'what other support can we give him at home?' What can we be doing kind of to support the learning that he gets in class and not go completely off tangent.

(Parents, Case Study 4)

Secondary versus primary

As with many other features of parental involvement, those with children in secondary school found it more difficult to support their child than those with children in primary school. It was common for parents to feel unsure about their ability to understand some of the work their child was doing as they got older.

She would show me her maths and I wouldn't even know it would go over the top of my head. I just get really, really, worried that we're a generation behind and it's been so long since I was at school.

(Parents, Case Study 3)

Linked to this was the fact that parents in both sectors commented on the differences in learning styles compared with when they were at school. This meant that they felt uncertain about how to help their child, worried that they would teach them the wrong thing.

When you don't know and … or the way I learnt things at school is so different from the way the children are taught now, it would be great. I often think it would be great if there was just a night that you could go and maybe just go to your child's year and see what they're learning, so that you can help at home.

(Parents, Case Study 1)

As previously discussed, parents did not often mention other forms of learning activities outside of homework unless prompted. However, when they were discussed, some practical barriers were raised: financial constraints and a lack of public transport in rural areas.

Areas for consideration

The idea of learning at home as a wider concept than just 'homework' is promoted to parents, particularly to those with older children.

Greater promotion of learning at home could be through schools in the form of support and information but would also benefit from more focus at a national level.

Greater thought should be given to how to support deprived parents in providing learning at home – and how to support those children who do not receive that support.

8. Parental representation

Summary of key points

Basic awareness of Parent Councils was high among parents in our survey – 90% said there was a Parent Council in their child's school, while just 8% were unsure (2% said there was no Parent Council). Parents were most likely to know that the Parent Council was involved in fundraising less likely to report awareness of the Parent Council playing a role in relation to supporting parental involvement in their child's learning and in the recruitment of senior school staff.

Descriptions of the role of Parent Councils offered by participants in the qualitative research focused on three broad areas – fundraising and events, representing parents' views, and feeding into school improvement. However, parents who were not involved with Parent Councils were unclear about their precise roles and activities.

Views on how the Parent Council communicated and involved the wider parent forum were mixed. There was praise for attempts to communicate more actively, and in different ways – for example, via Facebook. However, some parents indicated that some want to know more – for example, parents talked about wanting to know in advance how the Parent Council plan to spend money they are aiming to raise, or about specifics of school plans.

There were concerns over the representativeness of Parent Councils and this focused on two key issues:

- there was a perception that having a 'gender-balanced' Parent Council remained quite unusual.

- difficulties recruiting Council members from more deprived, less middle-class, and less educated backgrounds.

- a further barrier to joining the Parent Council was that parents were put off by an impression that they were '*cliquey'* and that new members and new ideas were not welcome.

Introduction

Parent Councils are a mechanism for parental representation in schools. The 2006 Act states that each school's parent forum (the collective name for every parent, carer or guardian at a school) has the right to set up a Parent Council. The Act is designed to allow considerable flexibility to Parent Councils, enabling parents at each school to decide how the Parent Council will work and what it focuses on. However, at the same time it anticipates that the Parent Council will play a role in three main areas:

- **Supporting the school in its work with pupils** – including, for example, being involved in school planning and policy, building relationships between the school and parents, communicating with parents about school activities, facilitating school events and fundraising.

- **Representing the views of parents and carers** – the Parent Council has the right to represent the views of parents on a wide variety of educational matters. Guidance for the Act states that it is good practice to ascertain the views of the wider parent forum and that the Parent Council should have arrangements in place for doing so.

- **Encourage links** between the school, parents and carers, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community.

In this chapter, we consider evidence from the parent survey and qualitative case studies on awareness and understanding of the Parent Council and their role. Do Parent Councils, head teachers and parents see the role of the Parent Council in similar terms to those envisaged by the Act? How do Parent Councils communicate with parents? And how representative are they – both in terms of their composition and how effectively they represent the views of the wider parent forum?
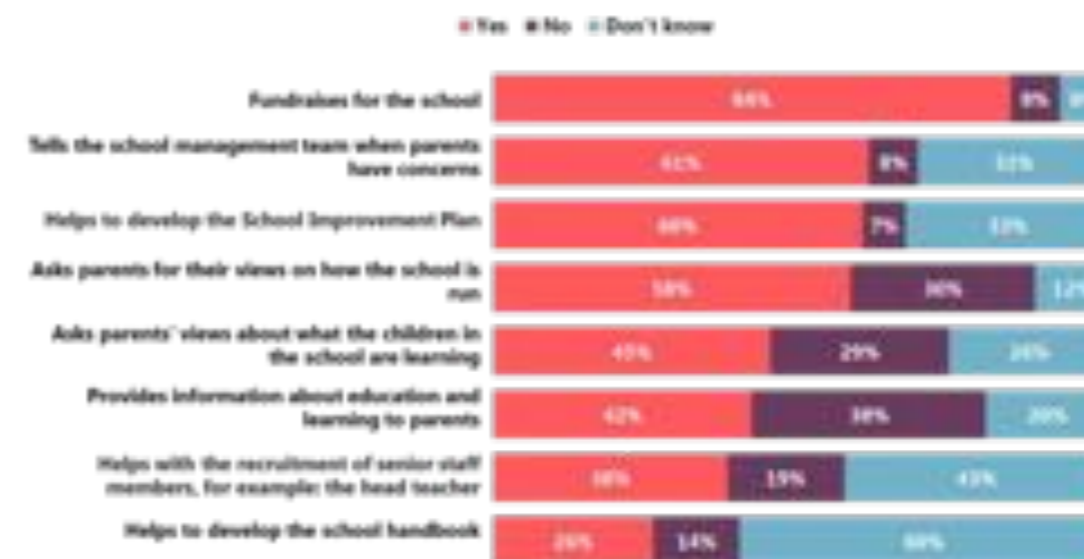
Awareness and role of Parent Councils

Basic awareness of Parent Councils was high among parents in our survey – 90% said there was a Parent Council in their child's school, while just 8% were unsure (2% said there was no Parent Council). Awareness was slightly higher among the women we spoke to (93% compared with 85% of men) and among parents of primary aged children (94% compared with 87% of those with secondary aged children). However, in general awareness of the existence of a Parent Council at their child's school was high across all the parents we surveyed.

Fundraising tops the list of activities parents are aware of their Parent Council getting involved in – 84% of parents who were aware of their school's Parent Council but were not members reported that the Parent Council fundraises for the school (Figure 8.1). Around 6 in 10 were aware of their Parent Council playing a role in representing their views by conveying their concerns to senior management (61%) or asking them how the school is run (58%). A similar proportion (60%) were aware of the Parent Council contributing to the school improvement plan. Parents were less likely to report awareness of the Parent Council playing a role in relation to supporting parental involvement in their child's learning – 45% said their Parent Council asked parents' views about what children are learning in school, and 42% that they provided information about education and learning to parents.

Only 38% of parents who were not on the Council thought their Parent Council helped with recruitment of senior staff. However, among the small group of parents in our survey who were on a Parent Council (n = 58), three quarters (76%) said they had been involved in senior staff recruitment (as envisaged in the 2006 Act).

Only around a quarter (26%) of parents were aware of the Parent Council having had an input to the school handbook.

Figure 8.1 What parents think the Parent Council does at their child's school

Base = 396 (all who report having a Parent Council but are not members)

Descriptions of the role of Parent Councils offered by participants in the qualitative research focused on three broad areas – **fundraising and events**, **representing parents' views**, and **feeding into school improvement** (not just the school improvement plan, but also feeding into policies around specific areas like homework, or discussing how to improve the school campus and its surroundings – including examples where the Parent Council had worked actively with the wider community to achieve this). While Parent Council members did identify some issues around keeping members (particularly new members) focused on the 'big picture' rather than their own child's experiences or specific grievances, it was generally felt that this was managed by longer-standing members and/or the chair explaining that this was not the purpose of the Parent Council:

While elements of the three main roles – fundraising, representation and improvement – were discussed across the qualitative interviews, participants expressed divergent views about how much emphasis was or should be given to each. For example, in one case study it was suggested (by both Parent Council members and other parents) that the Parent Council only really communicated with parents around ideas and plans for fundraising activities, which appeared to be their main focus. This was a source of some frustration for one Council Member who felt they ought to be more involved in scrutinising the school improvement plan and questioning whether targets were being met, but for other Council members this appeared to be seen as outside their remit. In contrast, another Parent Council described their main focus as driving improvement for pupils.

It's about the pupils and driving them forward. I don't think it's ever about the parents or it isn't for me as such. I want to see that the pupils are stepping forward and that they're going in the right direction from start to finish from S1 to S6 that they are actually, there is paths that they are taking. I want to be involved in those paths to ensure that they are always on the right step, the school is driving them, the community is involved.

(Parent Council Member, Case Study 4)

In one case study school, the fundraising and strategic roles had been split, so that the Parent Council focused on school strategy and policy, while fundraising was led by the Parent Teachers Association. This structure was felt to work well by both the Parent Council and the Head Teacher, who reported that it prevented an exclusive

fundraising focus and meant the Parent Council could focus more time and resources on driving school improvement. While head teachers clearly valued the fundraising role of Parent Councils, those interviewed in our case studies also valued their input to school policy and strategy – one Head Teacher claimed that he treated Parent Council meetings the same as he would a senior staff meeting and viewed them as integral to any school strategy or decision-making process. Parent Council members who took part in our survey certainly believed their views were taken seriously – 9 in 10 felt the Head Teacher took the views of the Parent Council into consideration to a great extent (57%) or to some extent (31%). A majority (75%) of parents who were not involved with the Parent Council also felt the Head Teacher took Parent Council views into account.

In addition to differences in how much they focused on fundraising vs. other activities, case study Parent Councils also varied in how they approached 'representing' the views of the wider parent forum. While all felt they had a role to play in providing a *'voice for parents'*, they differed in how actively or formally they sought input from the wider parent body, or whether they relied more on informal discussions *'at the school gate'*. Parent Councils clearly saw themselves as having a role as a conduit for conveying parent concerns to school management. However, while Parent Councils had adopted a range of ways of communicating with parents to let them know what they were doing and ask for ideas (see next section for details), they appeared to be primarily reliant on parents approaching them with issues, rather than more actively gathering wider views. Exceptions to this included a case study Parent Council carrying out a survey of all parents (although parents expressed scepticism about how effective this was in engaging all parents), and another which said they had actively sought parents' suggestions about what would most improve the school for pupils and then taken this as their focus for action. Parent Councils indicated that they found making parents' voices heard the most '*challenging'* element of their role, and that constraints around school funding might be making balancing this role with their fundraising remit even more difficult.

Parents who were not involved with Parent Councils were unclear about their precise roles and activities. While they tended to mention a fundraising role, they were less clear about whether or how Parent Councils represent the views of the wider parent forum. One view was that Parent Council members do this indirectly, as parents themselves. It was suggested that other parents are generally happy to rely on them to do this effectively and would only get in touch with them directly if there was something they felt particularly strongly about. A related view was that if parents had an issue, they would go directly to the school with it rather than raising it via the Parent Council. Indeed, our survey suggests that only 1% of parents would normally choose to feed back to the school about their child's education via the Parent Council. There was also some scepticism among parents about whether or not Parent Councils could feasibly represent the views of all parents. However, at the same time, parents expressed frustration that they were not involved in strategic discussions about the school, which they saw as limited to the Parent Council – indicating that parents do want to feed in their views more directly in some cases.

Parent Councils can't represent all parents' views. I would say the majority of parents wouldn't get involved with the school anyway or will be arm's length for whatever reason they are. So, there is no way a Parent Council can ever represent the views of all the parents. I think the Parent Council can probably, dare I say, at its best represents the views of the people who are concerned and are in that room and are involved enough, and I think that just comes back to the personalities that are involved.

(Parent, Case Study 3)

There was nothing about the school saying "actually we're considering these different things, does anybody have anything to say on it?" Those kind of conversations tend to only happen with proper bodies, like the Parent Council or those groups, which gets a bit frustrating for a parent who is not involved in all of that. It doesn't allow the other parents who don't want to get involved in that.

(Parent, Case Study 3)

Communication – how do people find out about the Parent Council?

A majority (71%) of parents who took part in our survey said their Parent Council kept in touch with them, with over half (55%) reporting that they heard from them at least once a term. However, parents whose children were at Primary School reported more frequent communication, while 34% of parents whose children were at Secondary School said their Parent Council never got in touch with them (compared with 17% of Primary parents – Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 How often, if at all, does the Parent Council gets in touch with you?
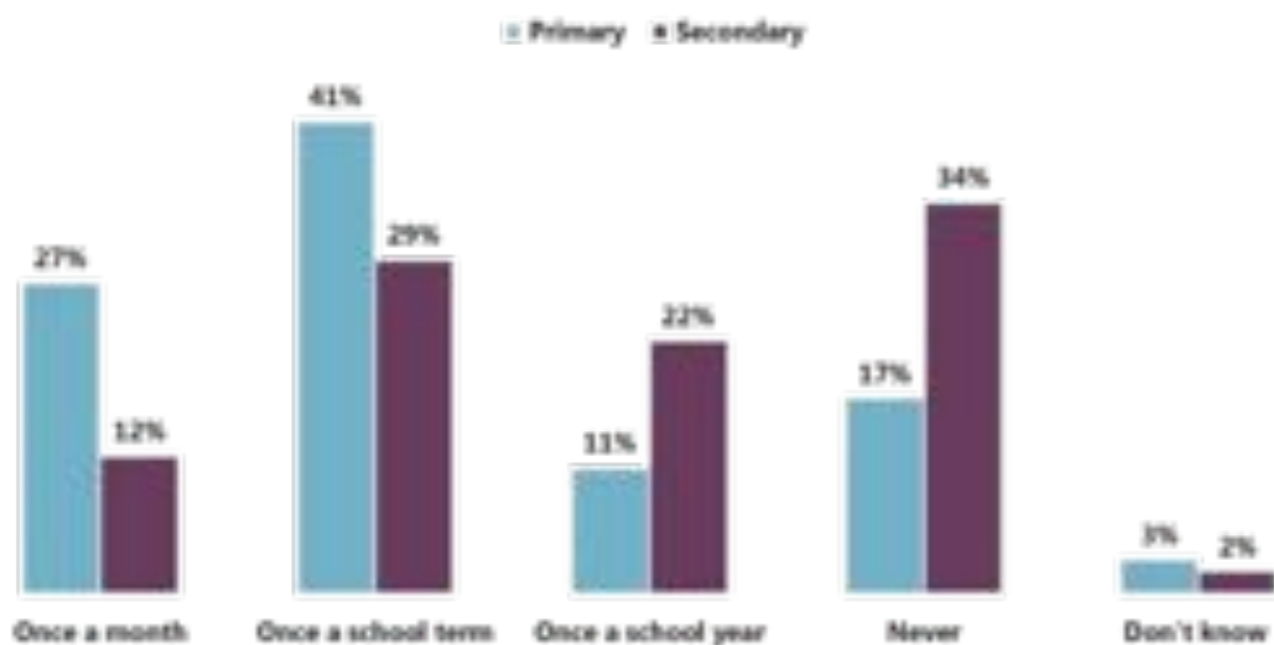
Base: Primary = 195; Secondary = 201

Parent Councils identified a variety of ways in which they had tried to communicate what their activities to parents, including:

- Informally, through conversations at the school gates
- Via Social Media, including setting up a Parent Council Facebook Group and Twitter account
- Through letters home, sections in the school newsletter, and through a specific Parent Council newsletter
- On the school webpages
- Producing a video of the pupils highlighting how money raised by the Parent Council had been spent
- Carrying out a survey of parents
- Through attending events, particularly those aimed at new parents (induction days, coffee mornings and welcome nights were all mentioned).

I think the only problem is actually reaching all the parents across the board, really you're trying to get everybody involved. What we did do last year was that P1 coffee morning with Mrs X, was because obviously they are new to the school it was to try to get them involved, we had wee coffee mornings that were right at nine o'clock and it was really to grab them to just come up stairs, five minutes have a coffee, we're not discussing curriculum for excellence, we're just saying "hello, how was your weekend, what did you do, what are you having for dinner?"

(Parent Council, Case Study 1)

As indicated above, however, there was variation both across these methods and between Parent Councils in how far communication is perceived to be two-way (actively seeking input rather than just telling parents what has been happening) and in what it focused on (e.g. fundraising vs. school strategy discussions).

Parents who were not on the Parent Council expressed mixed views on how well the Parent Council communicate with the parent forum. There was praise for attempts to communicate more actively, and in different ways – for example, via Facebook. One view was that the information is there and parents are aware of it, but that they do not pay much attention to it:

I'm just a bit ignorant because I don't pay an awful lot of attention to it. I think I've just maybe got to that stage as well, mine are nearly through the school so, but again I think that information is all there, because it comes out in newsletters or it's mentioned at these nights that the Parent Council have been involved or the PTA have been running and you'll get funds for certain things and that.

(Parent, Case Study 1)

However, discussions with parents also indicated that that some want to know more – for example, parents talked about wanting to know in advance how the Parent Council plan to spend money they are aiming to raise, or about specifics of school plans, or about what is on the agenda for upcoming Council meetings:

But, they don't say what it's about. "This is what we're going to be talking about or this is what we spoke about the last time. Even if you can't make it send us your views on these things and we'll discuss it there the best we can, obviously it will be great to have you", all of that. … at the moment the Parent Council does say, come and join, but it doesn't say come to the meeting to say about what, and most parents won't do that, kind of just turn up, and go, "what's happening?"

(Parent, Case Study 3)

Composition – who is (and is not) on Parent Councils?

Thirteen percent of parents in our survey were on the Parent Council. This is considerably higher than the proportion of all parents who are members of Parent Councils, indicating that our sample may be more involved with school activities than average. However, the actual number of Parent Councillors within our survey (n = 58) was too small to provide a robust breakdown of the characteristics of Parent Councillors, so we are reliant on our qualitative case studies to explore the profile of Parent Councils. Two key issues of 'representativeness' emerged in discussion - gender, and socio-economic class.

Gender-balance

Although Parent Councils in all four case study areas included both men and women, there were more women than men overall and there was a perception that having a 'gender-balanced' Parent Council remained quite unusual. One male Parent Council member said he had, on occasion, felt uncomfortable as a result of some of the suggested fundraising activities being very female-oriented.

Socio-economic class

Parent Council members, other parents and head teachers all recognised difficulties recruiting more Council members from more deprived, less middle-class, and less formally educated backgrounds as a major issue:

One head teacher commented that while approximately 90% of the catchment area for the school was in areas classed as SIMD 1 (the most deprived areas in Scotland), the Parent Council was almost entirely made up of parents from more affluent areas. Parent Council members expressed a strong desire to get parents from different backgrounds involved, but indicated that they were not always sure how to go about this, in some cases indicating a sense of resignation that *'no matter what'* some parents will not attend things at school:

I think it's tricky, I don't know how to target them to be honest.

(Parent Council, Case Study 2).

Interviewees put forward various explanations as to why it is so difficult to get people from more deprived backgrounds involved. One suggestion was that those whose own engagement with education may have ended early may feel less comfortable in formal, meeting settings like those typically adopted for Parent Councils. Another was that Parent Councils have a 'middle-class professional' image which can be off-putting. Both parents who had themselves joined Parent Councils, and those who had not, indicated that they could find the idea of meetings intimidating, feel out of place, and not be sure whether they could contribute:

I mean again I came in as a new parent and I was very much like "I don't know" and I literally sat at the meetings for a huge number of times, just sat and said not very much.

(Parent Council, Case Study 2)

I wouldn't class myself as academic and it terrifies me some of the things. You think these people are so educated.

(Parent Council, Case Study 1)

Participant 1: The image is very professional, very knowledgeable, and I would feel uncomfortable and out of place.

Participant 2: It does seem that way, because some of the people you do actually come across at Parent Council, they are standing up and they are presenting, and they are quite confident, and it's usually the blokes that you see more than the females.

(Parents, Case Study 4)

Comments from both Head teachers and parents suggested that even the name 'Parent Council' could be off-putting for some parents – '*it sounds scary*' (Parent, Case Study 3).

Other barriers to joining Parent Councils

Regardless of gender or background, time was seen as a major barrier to parents joining Parent Councils. This was confirmed by our survey: among those who were not current members, around half (46%) said they would in principle be interested in joining, but only 8% were definitely interested – 38% said they would not have the time (Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.3 Interest in joining the Parent Council at child's school

Yes, definitely ▪ Yes, but I don't have the time ▪ No
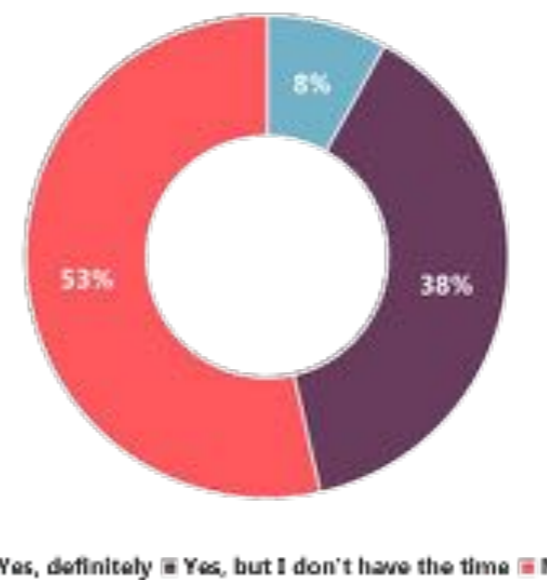
Base = 396 (all who report having a Parent Council but are not members)

Groups that were particularly likely to say they would be interested but did not have the time included: men (45% compared with 33% of women); those who were working full-time (42% compared with 32% of part-time workers and 28% of those who were not working); and those from higher socio-economic groups (45% of those in high socio-economic classifications, compared with 27% of those in low socio-economic classifications). Those whose children were in secondary school were more likely to say outright that they would not be interested in joining the Parent Council (60%, compared with 46% of Primary parents).

Qualitative interviews indicated that while some parents wanted to be more involved in school activities, they felt unable to dedicate the amount of time they believed was required if you joined the Council. At the same time, they were appreciative of the time and effort that Parent Councillors do put in:

I used to think how tremendous is that person. I could never do that, I would never have the time, I wouldn't have the, I don't like to say it, the willingness, because they do, they put everything into it.

(Parent, Case Study 4)

On the other hand, parents also suggested that they could be put off Parent Councils by an impression that they were '*cliquey*' and that new members and new ideas were not welcome:

I went to join the Parent Council and I never went back had a really bad experience … Because I thought I'll go along, I'll help out, but it was a clique of women who did the same job every year, weren't really interested, they wanted people to commit to go to every meeting all the time, which you couldn't do … Which I couldn't do, I was working, and as an outsider I didn't feel welcome.

(Parent, Case Study 3)

Parent Council members also described having encountered a degree of 'cliqueiness' when they first joined, and said they had worked hard to ensure that the Parent Council was more open to new members, including ensuring that Chairs are only in place for a fixed term.

Knowing how to join the Parent Council does not appear to be a barrier in general – 78% of survey respondents said they knew how to join the Parent Council, although men were less likely than women to say they knew how to join (68% compared with 83%).

> **Areas for consideration**
>
> **Greater clarity is required in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the Parent Council (both for new council members and the wider parent forum).**
>
> **Parent Councils should use multiple channels of communication to encourage a two-way conversation with the parent forum and not rely solely on informal 'at the school gates' discussion.**
>
> **There remains a need to encourage more men to join Parent Councils. While there is no straightforward solution to this, ensuring that discussions are inclusive and activities do not appear to exclude fathers is a pre-requisite.**
>
> **Engaging more parents from deprived and less formally educated backgrounds is a major challenge for Parent Councils. More guidance and support as to how to encourage parents from different backgrounds to join Parent Councils may be needed.**
>
> **The 2006 Act states that it is up to parents to decide what to call their Parent Council – suggestions on how to 'rebrand' them to sound less intimidating and formal might be helpful.**

9. Conclusions

Overall, parents were fairly satisfied with the relationship they have with their child's school. While there were some issues, communication was thought to be good and they felt they had ample opportunity to get involved with school life. The main concern for most parents was one of time and having the flexibility to get involved around their other work and family commitments. However, this overarching viewpoint hides three key issues.

First, this does not apply to all parents equally, while schools are effectively involving some parents in their child's school life and learning there are certain groups that are not being included to the same extent:

- Potentially disadvantaged vulnerable groups – those from deprived backgrounds, those with mental health problems, and those with negative experiences of, and attitudes towards, education.

- Non-resident parents.

- Those with language or literacy barriers.

Second, there was a clear divide between the primary and secondary sector. As children progress through the education system parents become less involved. This is in part due to different systems in place in secondary school, for example that a child has several teachers instead of just one. However, there was also a sense of trepidation in that way in which parents considered their child's learning at secondary school. It was common for them to feel less able to understand the learning their child is undertaking.

Third, while parents were happy with the level of communication that they received from the school, their role was very much one of passive consumption and not active contribution. It should be borne in mind that parents were happy with this model but in order to encourage full engagement between the parents and school it may be that more active participation is required.

Learning at home is a key area in which improvements can be made as most parents did not have a full understanding of what this entailed as laid out in the 2016 Act. They most commonly spoke of learning at home in reference to helping their child with their homework. Even among those who did see a role for themselves beyond assistance with homework, they commented on practical aspects of learning, for example visits to historic sites. There was no mention of the more intangible aspects of learning at home in which parents play a key role such as developing respect, resilience and self-confidence. Furthermore, schools felt that this was an area in which they could provide more support to parents as they did not, on the whole, provide resources unless requested.

Parent Councils were in place across all of the case study schools. For the most part they were felt to be working well, with effective engagement with the school. However, there were several areas that require more consideration:

- the wider parent forum does not have a high level of awareness of the work of the Parent Council

- there is a lack of clarity over the roles and responsibilities of the Parent Council, particularly in relation to the management of the school

- there is still a lack of representation from certain types of parents in Parent Council's (those with deprived backgrounds, men, ethnic minorities) meaning it is more difficult for them to represent the views of the whole parent forum

Substantial variation between the approaches of the different local authorities were found in terms of the publically available documentation and information related to parental involvement.

Very few of the local authority strategies were up-to-date, had details of how/when they would be reviewed, had evidence of parent consultation or had clear objectives. However, of the 29 that were available, all followed the 2006 parental involvement guidelines.

10. Appendix A – Telephone survey

16-025668-01 National Parent Forum Scotland Questionnaire.V9

<INSERT INTRODUCTION> **Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is XXX. I'm calling from Ipsos MORI Scotland, the independent research organisation. We're conducting a short survey on behalf of the National Parent Forum of Scotland to help inform an independent review of parent involvement in education, and are interested to hear your opinions**

Qa Can you spare around 15 minutes to answer some questions please?

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO Qb
No	2	CLOSE

ADD IF NECESSARY: "I'd like to assure you that all of the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only. It will not be possible to identify any particular individuals or addresses in the results."

MRS STATEMENT: Before we begin, I'd like to inform you that Ipsos MORI is a member of the Market Research Society. All information that you give us will be treated in the strictest confidence and your identity will not be passed on to a third party or connected to your answers in any way without your consent.

Screening

Qb	Firstly, can I just check, are you a parent or legal guardian of a child at either primary or secondary school. By this, I mean you have parental responsibility and are a primary care giver for that child. (INTERVIEWER NOTE: This should refer to the past school year which finished in July)	
	Yes, primary	CHECK QUOTA
	Yes, secondary	CHECK QUOTA
	Yes, both a child/ children in primary and secondary education	CHECK QUOTA
	No	CLOSE
	Refused	CLOSE

	For the purpose of this survey, please could you answer the questions based on your child at [primary/secondary] school.

Qbiii	And do you have more than one child at <TEXT SUB PRIMARY/SECONDARY> school?	
	(INTERVIEWER NOTE: This should refer to the past school year which finished in July)	
	IF REFUSED/NECESSARY- THIS IS ONLY SO WE KNOW WHAT CONTEXT TO ASK THE QUESTIONS IN	
	Yes	1
	No	2

ALL WHO SAY CODE 1 @QBiii
For this survey, please answer all the questions relating to the child in <TEXT SUB PRIMARY/SECONDARY> school whose birthday is coming up next

SEX   **INTERVIEWER CODE: Gender of participant**

	Male	CHECK QUOTA
	Female	CHECK QUOTA

ASK ALL

Q1	Within the last school year, have you done any of the following at your child's <primary/secondary> school?			
	READ OUT. ROTATE A-H. SINGLE CODE			
		Yes	**No**	Don't know (DNRO)
A	**Attended a one to one meeting with a teacher to discuss your child's learning, for example: a parent's evening, parent consultation, or progress meeting**	**1**	**2**	3
B	**Attended open sessions or afternoons** (IF NECESSARY: when you can go into the school and get involved with learning activities)	**1**	**2**	3
C	**Attended a school fundraising event**	**1**	**2**	3
D	**Helped out at school activities such as trips or school discos or proms**	**1**	**2**	3
E	**Attended a parent's social awareness/ information event, for example: on drugs or community safety**	**1**	**2**	3
F	**Attended a parents meeting or event about your child's learning, for example: how to help your child with reading, information about exams, or a careers event**	**1**	**2**	3
G	**Attended school events, such as concerts, plays, sports days.**	**1**	**2**	3
H	**Helped out with learning activities, for example: after- school clubs, paired reading, helping in the classroom.**	**1**	**2**	3

Q2	**How often, if at all, does the school get in touch with you about the following?** READ OUT. ROTATE A-D SINGLE CODE ONLY

		Monthly	Once every term	Once every school year	Never	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)
A	**General information about the school**	1	2	3	4	5
B	**Information about how your child is progressing with their learning**	1	2	3	4	5
C	**Information about which topics your child is currently learning about**	1	2	3	4	5
D	**Information on ways to help your child continue learning at home**	1	2	3	4	5

Q3a	**How do you usually receive information, if at all, from your child's school?** DO NOT READ OUT MULTICODE
	Verbally/ face to face	1
	Letter sent home	2
	Email directly to yourself or other parent	3
	Texts directly to yourself or other parent	4

	Though school social media pages (for example; Twitter, Facebook)	5
	Parent section on school website	6
	In school newsletter	7
	Other (Please write in)	8
	Don't receive any information from the school	9
	Don't know	10

Q3b	**And how do you prefer to receive information from your child's school?** DO NOT READ OUT SINGLE CODE ONLY
	Verbally/ face to face	1
	Letter sent home	2
	Email directly to yourself/ other parent	3
	Texts directly to yourself/ other parent	4
	Though school social media pages	5
	Parent section on school website	6
	In school newsletter	7
	Other (Please write in)	8
	None	9
	Don't know	10

Q4	**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement…?** **My child's school takes the time commitments of parents into consideration when staff organise activities or meetings that parents may be invited to attend.** READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY
	Strongly agree	**1**

Tend to agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Tend to disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5
Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	6

ASK ALL

Q5a	How comfortable, or uncomfortable, do you feel about getting involved with learning activities at your child's school, for example: paired reading, helping in the classroom or with after school clubs. READ OUT.SINGLE CODE ONLY	
	Very comfortable	1
	Fairly comfortable	2
	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	3
	Fairly uncomfortable	4
	Very uncomfortable	5
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	6

ASK ALL

Q5b	How comfortable, or uncomfortable, do you feel about getting involved with wider school activities, for example: helping with school trips or social events, attending school plays or performances. READ OUT. SINGLE CODE ONLY	
	Very comfortable	1
	Fairly comfortable	2
	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	3
	Fairly uncomfortable	4
	Very uncomfortable	5
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	6

Q6	How would you normally feed back to the school about your child's education? (DO NOT READ OUT) MULTICODE	
	Through the Parent Council	1
	Parent's evening or other one to one meeting with your child's teacher	2
	Speaking with the head teacher	3
	Speaking with the class teacher	4
	Emailing head teacher	5
	Emailing class teacher	6
	Other (please write in)	7
	I don't feed back to the school	8
	Don't know	9

ASK ALL

Q7	I'm now going to read out some statements. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. READ OUT. ROTATE	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know (DNRO)
	I feel comfortable giving my views and opinions about the school to teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
	The school takes the views of parents into account when making changes to what happens in the school	1	2	3	4	5	6
	I feel comfortable asking teaching staff questions about my child's learning	1	2	3	4	5	6

The school tries to find out parents' views about how well it is doing for example: consultation events and questionnaires	1	2	3	4	5	6
The school handbook is useful	1	2	3	4	5	6

Parental representation

ASK ALL

Q8	Schools are encouraged to use a variety of ways to encourage <u>all</u> <u>parents</u> to raise issues, be consulted on school policy and give their views. The "Parent Forum" is the name given to the entire body of all parents, not just those on the Parent Council. Were you aware that there is such a thing as a "Parent Forum"? SINGLE CODE	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	3

ASK ALL

Q9	Parent Councils are a formal committee of parents who attempt to represent the views of parents and to work closely with the school management team and the parents to support the improvement of the school. They might also be called a "Parent Partnership" or have another name. Is there a Parent Council or similar representative body at your child's school? SINGLE CODE	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	3

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODE 1 AT Q9

Q10a	Are you a member of the Parent Council? SINGLE CODE	
	Yes	1

No	2
Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	3

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODE 1 AT Q10a

Q10b	Has the Parent Council ever helped to recruit a senior member of staff? SINGLE CODE	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	3

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODE 1 AT Q9

Q11	To what extent, if at all, do you think the head teacher takes the views and suggestions of the Parent Council into consideration? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE	
	To a great extent	1
	To some extent	2
	Just a little	3
	Not at all	4
	Don't know/ unsure	5

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODES 2 or 3 AT Q9

Q12a	If there was a Parent Council at your child's school, would you be interested in joining it? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE	
	Yes- definitely	1
	Yes- but I don't have the time	2
	No	3
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	4

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODES 2 OR 3 AT Q10a

Q12b	Would you be interested in joining the Parent Council at your child's school? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE

	Yes- definitely	1
	Yes- but I don't have the time	2
	No	3
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	4

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODES 2 OR 3 AT Q10a

Q13	Do you know how to join the Parent Council at your child's school?	
	DO NOT READ OUT SINGLE CODE	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	3

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODE 2 OR 3 AT Q10a

Q14	To what extent, if at all, do you think the views and suggestions of the Parent Council are valued by the school's senior management team?	
	READ OUT. SINGLE CODE	
	To a great extent	1
	To some extent	2
	Just a little	3
	Not at all	4
	Don't know/ unsure (DO NOT READ OUT)	5

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODE 2 2 OR 3 AT Q10a

Q15	Which if any of the following does the Parent Council at your child's school do?			
	READ OUT. ROTATE			
		Yes	No	Don't know (DNRO)
A	Asks parents' views about what the children in the school are learning	1	2	3
B	Tells the school management team when parents have concerns	1	2	3

C	Provides information about education and learning to parents	1	2	3
D	Asks parents for their views on how the school is run	1	2	3
E	Fundraises for the school	1	2	3
F	Helps to develop the School Improvement Plan	1	2	3
G	Helps to develop the School Handbook	1	2	3
H	Helps with the recruitment of senior staff members, for example: the head teacher	1	2	3

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODE 2 OR 3 AT Q10a

Q16	How often, if at all, does the Parent Council get in touch with you?	
	READ OUT. REVERSE	
	Once a month	1
	Once a school term	2
	Once a school year	3
	Never	4
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	5

ASK ALL WHO ANSWER CODES 2 or 3 AT Q9

Q17	If there was a Parent Council at your child's school, what do you think it should do?	
	PRE-CODED LIST DO NOT READ OUT MULTICODE	
	Asks parents' views about the topics their child is learning	1
	Tells the school management team when parents have concerns	2
	Provides information about education and learning to parents	3

	Asks parents for their views on how the school is run	4
	Fundraises for the school	5
	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	6

Learning at home

ASK ALL

Q18	I'm now going to read out some statements. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. READ OUT. ROTATE A-F. SINGLE CODE						
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
A	**The school encourages me to ensure my child does their set homework**	1	2	3	4	5	6
B	**The school encourages me to continue my child's learning at home in other ways than doing homework**	1	2	3	4	5	6
C	**The school offers suitable support to help me continue my child's learning at home**	1	2	3	4	5	6
D	**I know where to go to for additional support if my child is experiencing difficulties with their learning**	1	2	3	4	5	6
E	**I know where to find additional support or resources in my community to help me continue my child's learning at home** (IF NECESSARY: libraries, community centre, community learning workers, home school link workers)	1	2	3	4	5	6
F	**It's easy for me to talk to teachers about how I can continue my child's learning at home**	1	2	3	4	5	6

Demographics

READ OUT: I'd like to finish by asking some questions about you and your household…

ASK ALL

Q19	What is your marital status? DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE	
	Never married and never registered a same-sex civil partnership	1
	Married	2
	In a registered same-sex civil partnership	3
	Separated, but still legally married	4
	Separated, but still legally in a same-sex civil partnership.	5
	Divorced	6
	Formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved.	7
	Widowed.	8
	Surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership	9
	Prefer not to say	10

WRK **And are you…**

READ OUT

	Working 30 hours or more a week (Full time)	1	CHECK QUOTA
	Working 8 - 29 hours a week (Part-time)	2	
	Not working (under 8 hrs) – looking after home	3	
	Not working (under 8 hrs) - unemployed	4	
	Not working (under 8 hrs) - unemployed (not registered but seeking work)	5	CHECK QUOTA
	Not working (under 8 hrs) - retired	6	
	Not working (under 8 hrs) - student	7	
	Not working (under 8 hrs) - other (inc. sick or disabled)	8	
	Other WRITE IN	9	
	Don't know	10	

ASK ALL

Q20	Do you provide regular unpaid help or care to family members, friends, neighbours or others because they have either long-term physical or mental health disabilities or problems related to old-age? DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Prefer not to say	3

ALL WHO SAID THEY HAVE A CHILD IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Q21	**What year was the child that you have answered the survey about in?** **(INTERVIEWER NOTE: This should refer to the past school year which finished in July)** SINGLE CODE	
	P1	1
	P2	2
	P3	3
	P4	4
	P5	5
	P6	6
	P7	7
	Prefer not to say	8

ALL WHO SAID THEY HAVE A CHILD IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Q22	What year was the child that you have answered the survey about in? SINGLE CODE (INTERVIEWER NOTE: This should refer to the past school year which finished in July)	
	S1	1
	S2	2
	S3	3
	S4	4
	S5	5
	S6	6
	Prefer not to say	7

ASK ALL

Q23	Could you tell me whether you have any physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? (this could include any additional learning needs, such as dyslexia) SINGLE CODE	
	Yes, I have a physical or mental health condition or illness	1
	No I do not have a physical or mental health condition or illness	2
	Prefer not to say	3

Q24	Could you tell me whether your child has any physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? (this could include any additional learning needs, such as dyslexia) SINGLE CODE	
	Yes, my child has a physical or mental health condition or illness	1
	No, my child does not have a physical or mental health condition or illness	2
	Prefer not to say	3

ASK ALL

Q25	Is English your first language?	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Prefer not to say	3

ASK ALL

Q26	How confident do you feel with reading and writing English? READ OUT. SINGLE CODE	
	Very confident	1
	Fairly confident	2
	Not very confident	3
	Not at all confident	4
	Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	5

ASK ALL

Q27	How would you describe your ethnicity? DO NOT READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.	
	White- Scottish	1
	White- Other British	2
	White- Irish	3
	Any other white	4
	Mixed or multiple ethnicities	5
	Indian	6
	Pakistani	7
	Bangladeshi	8
	Chinese	9
	African	10
	Caribbean or Black	11

	Arab	12
	Any other ethnic background SPECIFY	13
	Prefer not to say	14

Q28	**Finally, what is your postcode?** REPEAT POSTCODE BACK TO RESPONDENT USING THE PHONETIC ALPHABET (e.g A for Alpha, B for Bravo etc) IF NECESSARY: THE REASON WE NEED THE POSTCODE IS BECAUSE WE ARE INTERESTED IN LOOKING AT HOW PEOPLE ANSWER QUESTIONS, BASED ON THEIR DIFFERENT AREAS	
	(PLEASE RECORD)	1
	REFUSED	2

COMPLETE - THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE

Thank you on behalf of Ipsos MORI. If you have any queries regarding the survey or our company, I can give you the telephone number of the company or the Market Research Society Freephone number.

PROVIDE AS NECESSARY:
Company Number - 0131 561 4603
MRS Freephone Number - 0500 39 69 99
Job number – 16-025668-01

INTERVIEWERS: MRS can only provide confirmation that we are a genuine Market Research Company.
FINAL VERSION