

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT - NEXT STEPS

STATEMENT FROM MAUREEN WATT, MINISTER FOR SCHOOLS AND SKILLS

The past year has seen widespread interest among parents in working with schools and I am delighted to see so many parents coming forward to be part of the new Parent Councils. Local authority indications are that many new parents are becoming involved and that over 90% of their schools will have Parent Councils in place by the end of the year.

We know parents make a difference to their children's learning and that what they do at home to encourage and support their children is crucial. I want to help schools and Parent Councils think about what more they can do to involve all parents. For that reason I am extending our support for the National Parental Involvement Co-ordinator post based in Learning and Teaching Scotland until 2010. The Co-ordinator will work with a new Field Team over the coming 12-18 months to help parents and schools look at how all parents can support their children's learning and the work of schools. The Field Team will look to highlight and share examples of good practice.

I am keen that parents have the chance to work in partnership with schools and that the new Parent Councils ensure that the voice of parents is heard at local level. To this end we will encourage education authorities to work with Parent Councils when developing local education policy.

Parents also have a key role as partners at the national level and I want to encourage Parent Councils to think about how their views might contribute to national policy development. I recognise that national representation is a matter for parents themselves to agree and that the new Parent Councils will need time to discuss this. With this in mind we are offering local authorities modest funding to help Parent Councils think about how their views might be best represented, including what kind of national body they may wish to support them. We will work with all stakeholders with an interest in promoting this discussion.

Our proposals are in line with the main recommendation of a report into the question of a national parent body to support Parent Councils. The report can be viewed on the Scottish Government website, <http://www.Scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/10/16091550/0>

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