



Aberdeen Parent Council Toolkit



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WELCOME

Thank you for getting involved in your school's Parent Council.

In Aberdeen city, parents' views and opinions are valued and should be included and taken into account when making decisions that affect their family and school. Being part of a parent council gives parents an opportunity to have a say in improving how their school delivers education, shapes its policies and communicates its priorities for supporting children and families with learning.

Parent Councils are therefore best placed to motivate and support parents to get actively involved in their child's learning; contribute to school life through volunteering their time, skills and knowledge as well helping the school to share information, advice and support for children and families.

This toolkit will provide relevant information to support the work of the Parent Council in your school.



1.0 DEFINITIONS

Here are some useful definitions of common words which are associated with Parent Councils.

Parent/s: The term “parents” refers to anyone with parental responsibilities and others who care for or look after children or young people.

Parent Forum:

The Parent Forum is the collective name given to all parents including guardians and carers of all children attending the school.

Parent Council:

A Parent Council is an independently constituted group of parents who gather and represent the views of parents where possible at their school. They have a separate function to the school but working in close partnership with the school to promote parental involvement and support school improvement. They are the recognised way for schools and Aberdeen City Council to consult with parents. Parent Councils are therefore accountable to their Parent Forum.

Parent Council member:

Any parent with a child at the school can volunteer to become a member of the Parent Council. Parents can be members of the Parent Council for as long as they have a child at school.

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006:

The Act places responsibility on local authorities to improve parental involvement in three ways - learning at home, home/school partnerships and parental representation, which includes Parent Councils. More guidance on the 2006 Act and what it means for Parent Councils can be found **here**.

PTA:

The PTA is a group of parents who fundraise for the school. The PTA can function independently or be a sub-group of the Parent Council.

Parent Council Constitution:

A Parent Council constitution is a document stating the aims and guiding principles that a Parent Council will follow. It is advisable to have a constitution and update it regularly to ensure all parents know what your Parent Council does and what it stands for.

Pupil Equity Funding (PEF):

PEF is additional funding provided by the Scottish Government allocated to schools based on free school meal registrations and targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap. Parent Councils may be consulted on how this funding is allocated in your school.

[Find out more about Acronyms used in Scottish Education](#) 

2.0 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A PARENT COUNCIL?

The main aim of a Parent Council is to help parents and carers to become actively engaged and involved in their children's learning and life of the school. Parent councils must ensure they provide a voice for parents and represent their views effectively to the school.

Under the Parental Involvement Act 2006 legislation the role of the Parent Council is to:

- Support the school in its work to develop strong home/school partnerships with pupils and their families.
- Support the head teacher and the school in how to involve parents in their children's learning and in the life of the school.
- Represent and provide a voice for parents in the school and Aberdeen City Council on issues that are important to their children and families.
- Encourage links between school, parents and carers, pupils, pre-school nursery groups and the wider local community.

What are your responsibilities?

- Report and communicate with parents at least once a year at the AGM.
- Work alongside the school to provide good parental support that helps parents engage in their children learning.
- Make sure parents get the information they need in an accessible way.
- Help gather parent views and ensure the school receives their feedback views on the following; school improvement and performance; policy development; learning and the curriculum; homework; subject choice and careers advice.
- Be involved in the recruitment of Headteachers and Depute Head teachers.
- Be involved in school inspections with HMIE.
- Support social and fundraising activities.

What you are NOT responsible for?

- Representing individual parent's views or issues to the Head Teacher.
- Handling parental complaints.
- Discussing individual children or school staff at your meetings.

[Find out more Parent Council information](#) >

[The purpose and role of Parent Councils](#) >

3.0 GETTING INVOLVED IN PARENT COUNCIL

Here is a list of ideas:

- Motivate and engage parents in their children's learning by running social / community events for children and their families
- Communicate regularly with the Parent Forum to both hear their views and keep them informed through newsletters, Facebook and Twitter
- Work together with the school to decide the key priorities to take forward on the school **improvement plan**
- Help make links with the wider community such as community organisations, local care homes, churches local business links and Partnership Forums
- Volunteering - capture the unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience of parents such as Developing the Workforce (DYW) lunchtime and afterschool clubs and sports
- Developing information workshops around parenting eg. Family Learning, Emotion Works, Sleep, Cybersafety and child development
- Helping support parenting resources and tips for supporting homework
- Working together to develop school policies such as behaviour, homework, poverty proofing and the school handbook
- Develop a walking bus scheme in your neighbourhood like **Cults Primary**
- Supporting transition projects between nursery, primary and secondary stages
- Joining a working group with pupils and or staff to improve learning for all eg Eco school, Rights Respecting School, wider achievement and outdoor learning
- Campaigning to support road safety, building /playground improvements and breakfast and afterschool care
- Fundraising to help the school to enhance what it offers to children and families

[The purpose and role of Parent Councils >](#)

[A guide to gathering views and ensuring parents' voices are heard in your school >](#)

[Parents as partners in their children's learning Toolkit >](#)

4.0 OFFICE BEARERS

It is good practice to have office bearers in place so that your Parent Council can operate and communicate effectively. Most committees have a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. It is good practice to have someone to act as Chair and it is law that the chair of a Parent Council must always be a parent/carer with a child at the school.

New office bearers should be fully aware of key roles and responsibilities and work as part of a team. It is everyone's responsibility to make the group work and it should not be left to one person to achieve the aims of the committee.

The Chairperson's role is to:

- make sure PC meetings run smoothly and efficiently.
- allocate tasks to other members of the group and makes sure these are completed.
- ensure all Parent Council members understand they represent all the parents in the school
- liaise with the headteacher, parent forum and Aberdeen City Council
- be involved in the HMIE school inspection process
- create an annual report to the Parent Forum – usually at the AGM

The Secretary role is to

- support the Chairperson to ensure the smooth running of the PC/PTA
- maintain effective communication links between committee members and between the PC/PTA and the school
- ensure meetings are well organised and minuted
- make sure agendas and minutes are sent out in a timely manner to committee members and the wider parent forum
- maintain good records and administration and keep them secure
- handle communication and correspondence

The Treasurer role is to:

- keep accurate financial records as per Aberdeen City Council Finance Guidelines
- present a written financial report and evidence of bank balances at each Parent Council meeting
- liaise with the bank and hold the cheque book
- ensure proper cash handling and banking processes are followed
- pay agreed expenses
- prepare the annual accounts and ensure the accounts are independently audited and sign them off before presenting them at the AGM
- provide and account for cash floats at events if appropriate

For more information on the roles of committee members use:

[Chairperson](#) >

[Committee Member](#) >

[Secretary](#) >

[Fundraising Information](#) >

[Treasurer](#) >

[Funding source](#) >

5.0 GOOD PRACTICE MEETINGS GUIDES

All meetings should be welcoming to all parents and not exclusive to committee members. Every meeting should be focussed on fulfilling the aims of the constitution. Print your aims and have them visible at every meeting. Your Parent Council is expected to be run efficiently and effectively.

All office bearers and committee members understand their roles and responsibilities.

Parent Councils should be mindful of representing general parent views and promoting parent involvement as well as supporting the school to improve.

Members of the Parent Council and Parent Forum should have plenty of notice for meetings. Committee meeting dates are well publicised in advance. It is good practice to agree a calendar of meetings for the whole school year.

Every effort should be made to host meetings to maximise attendance and consider offering childcare where appropriate.

Make every effort to seek everyone's input at the meetings, ensure the agenda is clear and sent out a week beforehand and is achievable in the time allocated.

Seek a commitment from everyone present to stay on topic and avoid anecdotal stories that may not be factual. Ensure members do not use meetings to voice personal agendas or grievances or do so on behalf of other parents.

Ensure agreed minutes are widely distributed promptly and make sure there is a Treasurer's report at every meeting.

[Our Parent Council Health Check will help you to highlight areas for improvement](#) ➤

[Good Practice Guide - Working with your Parent Council](#) ➤

[Good Practice Guide Parent Council - Working with your Head Teacher and School](#) ➤

[Running a successful online meeting](#) ➤

Constitution

A constitution is a set of rules that guides how your group will work. The constitution will state clearly what the group's aims are, what powers they have, and how it will work. **Here is an example.**

It is important that everyone understands the aims and should always be focussed on them.

Sometimes a **Code of Conduct** and expectations can be added to help support the aims.

Communication

The key to a successful relationship is effective clear communication. Every parent, pupil and staff member should know they have a supportive parent council who is working to make their school the best it can be. Communication is a two-way process, therefore listening is just as important as talking. It is important to use all channels of communication available to reach everyone

Consider different communication methods: leaflets, noticeboards, Facebook, Twitter, write articles for the school newsletter, questionnaires and surveys and be present at school events.

A Parent council communication strategy can be helpful as it sets up a regular, predictable routine way of sharing and collecting information from your meetings and feedback sessions.

Please have a Data Protection Policy in place - General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

If you use Facebook - ensure you have read ACC Social Media Guidelines. Use language which is positive, plain English and parent friendly.

Encourage and promote links to the Pupil Council/Pupil Leadership and Partnership Forums.

Be aware of the diversity of families in your school (social and cultural) and understand your role is to represent ALL parents.

General Housekeeping

Ensure your agreed minutes are shared with the wider Parent Forum, on the school website or emailed. Send them into **ECSPCMeetingMinutes@aberdeencity.gov.uk**

Review your constitution regularly (every 3-4 years) and share with the Parent Forum and send a copy to **dcuthill@aberdeencity.gov.uk**

Always use the Parent Council email address to allow a smooth handover from one Parent Council chair to the next.

Let Aberdeen City Council know when there is a change of officer bearer(s).

6.0 PLANNING SAFE EVENTS AND INSURANCE

Each time you run a social or fundraising coffee morning, disco, Christmas or summer fair you must be aware you are hosting a public event. It is important that you think about the safety of all those working and attending on each occasion.

Every event you run whether a Parent Council / PTA will be covered by your Public Liability Insurance. This insurance covers you for any negligence in decision or action that results in injury to a person or damage to property.

In general, this means that your insurance will cover most of the activities you plan. We advise every Parent Councils/PTAs to do a risk assessment every time you organise an event. This does not have to be a complicated exercise.

Risk Assessment: Parent Council Event information 

Please email **ACPCF@aberdeencity.gov.uk** to get a copy of your annual certificate.

7.0 MONEY MATTERS

Events

It is good practice to have a cash float for each activity and try to have the same amount of money for every float. Keep a record of this.

Keep some money aside for last minute purchases and to pay expenses to helpers. Helpers must have receipts and payments should be carefully recorded.

When there are lots of stalls/activities, it is a good idea to remove and count the money during the event and keep a running total of the takings.

Don't allow cash to be left unattended.

Make sure at least two people agree to help you count the money at the end of the event – they should not be close friends or family members. Record the takings on a sheet, with the date and time of the event. Ask the other people who have helped count the cash to sign the takings sheet.

Money should be counted or banked straight away. If it can't then arrange for it to be kept in a safe place, e.g. the school safe. Coins should be bagged, and notes bundled.

Make sure you are accompanied at all times if you carry a large amount of cash.

The Treasurer should produce the bank statement at the next PC meeting to show income has been banked.

Financial Guidelines for Parent Councils >

Poverty Proofing - The Cost of the School Day

Poverty Proofing the School Day supports schools to identify and overcome the barriers to learning that children and young people from families with less financial resources face.

The toolkit is designed to get everyone talking about The Cost of the School Day. Ideally this will include all members of your school community - teaching staff, parents, children and young people. Everyone should have input into making Cost of the School Day changes. Every school is unique, so the toolkit helps you as a parent council develop a unique plan, to make a difference to children and young people in your community.

Cost of the School Day – Aberdeen City Council Pledge

- No child or young person will start school without a breakfast
- All children and young people will have access to affordable school uniform and appropriate clothing for the North East
- Costs will not prohibit the participation of children and young people in the life of the school
- Parents, carers and children and young people will have easy access to financial advice

[Child Poverty Action Group >](#)

[Primary Resource >](#)

[Cost of the School Day Toolkit >](#)

[Secondary Resource >](#)

8.0 DATA PROTECTION GUIDANCE

The Parent Council will at some point collect some personal data. For example, storing parents contact details to support and improve communication between parents and your school and to run events and organise activities. It's vital that you look after personal data appropriately, to protect the rights of your volunteers, parents and staff as well as safeguard committee members who must be able to show they are following data protection regulations. It's also important that you tell people how and why you are using their personal data through a privacy notice.

Here are templates to help establish good practice. Please customise them to match what your Parent Council will do to ensure you are adhering to good Data Protection practice.

[Privacy Notice Template](#) 

[ACC Privacy Notice](#)  outlining how and why Parent Council members' data is used

[Connect Scotland - Guide to Data Protection](#) 

9.0 CONTACTS

Aberdeen City Council provides advice, support, training and funding for Parent Councils. Please get in touch to find out more about setting up a parent council, constitutions, grant applications and finance, developing good practice and training members.

Termly meetings are also arranged for all Parent Councils in the city to promote communication, partnership and networking opportunities. The meetings are called Parent Connect.

Contact: Donna Cuthill – Development Officer (Partnerships)

Email: dcuthill@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Tel: 01224 764821 or 07500 552754

Aberdeen City Parent Council Forum (ACPF)

The Aberdeen Parent Council Forum (APCF) is an independent, constituted parent group consisting of up to twenty-four members, two drawn from each associated school group, who discuss city wide issues and work alongside Children and Family Services to help shape policy and services. The APCF has two voting parent representatives on the Council's Education Operations Committee.

Email: ACPCF@aberdeencity.gov.uk

National Parent Forum Scotland NPFS – Aberdeen

The National Parent Forum Scotland website is a valuable source of information for parents and can be accessed at www.npfs.org.uk

The Aberdeen NPFS representative shares updates with Parent Council chairs through Aberdeen City Parent Forum.

Email: aberdeen@npfs.org.uk

Other useful contacts for Parent Council and resources for parents

[Parentzone website](#) ➤

[Connect Scotland](#) ➤

[Enquire – advice for Additional Support for Learning](#) ➤

[Parent Club](#) ➤