



## Country Report United Kingdom

### Is parental involvement in the making of school laws and/or regulations a current topic?

#### National level

From government level through to school level, all parents are perceived as partners in their children's education and as key educators. This is reflected in recent legislation and policy documents coming from the Scottish Government (previously called the Scottish Executive Education Department or SEED). There are 32 local authorities in Scotland and all local authorities' education departments and schools must comply with government legislation.

A key piece of legislation which underpins this view is the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 (➔ [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/08094112/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/08094112/0)) and the accompanying Guidance to the Act. This legislation places a duty on Scottish Ministers and education authorities to promote the involvement of parents in children's education and the wider life of the school. A practical toolkit called Parents as Partners in their Children's Learning complements these documents and includes a range of practical ideas and activities about improving parental involvement.

Other recent legislation also has a focus on the involvement of parents and pupils – seeking their views, working with parents and outlining their rights and the responsibilities and duties of education authorities and schools.

Examples of this legislation include The Race Relations (Amendment Act) 2000 and The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and its Code of Practice. Both of these highlight and support the involvement of all parents, including those from an ethnic minority background.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) focus on parental involvement in their inspections of schools and authorities and there are quality indicators (QIs) linked to this for evaluation purposes.

An example of these quality indicators is:

- Partnership with learners and parent:
  - Engaging parents in their children's learning and the life of the school
  - Consulting and communicating with learners and parents
  - Dialogue with learners and parents about the work of the school

Schools would be judged against six levels on their performance/progress in each of these areas. Schools can also use the indicators to evaluate their own progress. The document which sets out all the quality indicators – the core tool for self evaluation for all schools – is called How Good is Our School (HGIOS) 2007. HMIE have also produced supplementary evaluation documents, expanding on specific quality indicators and highlighting good practice.

Examples relevant to this report are

- Partnership with Parents (2006)
- Inclusion and Equality – Evaluating Educational Provision for Bilingual Learners (2006) and
- Inclusion and Equality – meeting the needs of Travellers and Gypsies (2005).

These documents are available at  
➔ [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk) – go to HMIE Publications – and further information is available via  
✉ [enquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk).

## Which parents deserve special attention?

Scottish legislation focuses on the involvement of all parents and often includes specific reference to ethnic minority families. There are specific documents which highlight the involvement of parents from an ethnic minority background, for example the HMIe documents mentioned above.

### Ethnic minority families

There is a growing focus on trying to include and involve ethnic minority parents. Nationally leaflets for parents on the Parental Involvement Bill and Parent Councils were translated and available to schools as required to ensure access by ethnic minority parents.

Schools are encouraged to

- establish a welcoming ethos
- use interpreters for initial contact and enrolment
- use interpreters to explain school systems
- support communication and access to school activities, parents' nights and meetings through translation and interpreters.

Many authorities have bilingual assistants to support parental involvement informally and formally. They also support pupils to access the curriculum in their first language when they have no / very little English. In some authorities these bilingual assistants are funded by mainstream funding, in others by project funding.

There have been many initiatives across authorities to support involvement of ethnic minority families in school and in their children's education. These include parent workshops and parent prompts for early literacy skills.

The Scottish EAL Coordinating Council (SEALCC) is a national group representing all EAL services in Scotland. With funding and support from SEED, SEALCC produced a document called Learning in 2+ Languages (👉 [www.ltscotland.org.uk/resources/l/genericresource\\_tcm4530612.asp?strReferringChannel=inclusiveeducation](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/resources/l/genericresource_tcm4530612.asp?strReferringChannel=inclusiveeducation)) which outlines good practice for teachers, schools and local authorities in ensuring effective inclusion for Bilingual Learners and their families. This is now in all schools in Scotland. Part of an EAL teacher's role is to ensure that all schools and teachers are aware of the good practice contained in this.

School systems, including those related to parental involvement and support, have a multi-agency dimension. Community Learning and Development, Social Work, Educational Psychologists and Health Professionals are some of the services in addition to teachers who offer both advisory and direct support to children and their families.

### Initial teacher education

There is nothing consistent that we have identified about parental involvement in initial teacher education courses though there are occasional examples of good practice. Generally students are asked to observe what happens about this when they are in schools on a teaching placement.

## Are there measures to support certain pupils ie.(im)migrants, ethnic minorities at school level?

All 32 education authorities in Scotland have some form of EAL provision to support the inclusion of ethnic minority pupils and their families, including migrants. This provision varies across authorities according to numbers and demogra-

phy. Where there are large numbers of pupils requiring EAL support within a school, there may be EAL teachers based solely within that school who work with the pupils either cooperatively within their classes or by extraction for a short time. Most commonly authorities have an EAL service with staff who work on a peripatetic basis supporting ethnic minority children, including migrants, in their own schools, usually working in several schools weekly for an allocated period of time. As well as EAL teachers, many EAL services have bilingual assistants who work to help EAL pupils in the early stages of acquiring English to access the curriculum in their own language. They also help communication between the school and parents.

EAL teachers offer support to pupils and staff in pre-school, primary and secondary schools in a range of ways: support with assessment; consultation and advice; direct teaching; curriculum development; and staff development. Part of the EAL teacher's role is to raise staff awareness in schools of good practice in supporting EAL pupils and to help them to take responsibility for EAL pupils' learning. In primary and secondary schools there would normally be a direct teaching element to the support from the EAL teacher, though rapidly growing numbers of migrant families with no additional funding are making some EAL services use their consultation and staff development roles more frequently, and, in some cases, in place of teaching support. EAL provision in pre-school is more variable across authorities. Some authorities may offer direct teaching support while others may offer consultation only. While there is a pre-school place available for every child, it is not statutory for parents to send their children to a pre-school establishment.

### Basic structure of the Scottish school system

The Scottish Government sets out National Priorities for education. Each education authority then

sets out its own priorities linked to the National Priorities. Each educational establishment in the authority then plans its own priorities and targets linked to its authority's priorities and the National Priorities. These plans in schools are called Development or Improvement Plans. The priorities in these plans are set for a 3 year cycle and targets are set and reviewed on an annual basis. There should be consultation with pupils and parents related to these plans.

A new curriculum framework from 3-18 is being introduced to the Scottish system.

This is called "A Curriculum for Excellence" ([↪ www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk](http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk)) and stresses that the curriculum should complement the important contributions of families and communities in enabling the young people of Scotland to develop as successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors. It highlights parental involvement and effective partnership arrangements to enable schools to build on children's learning and achievements, within and beyond school.

#### Pre-school education

This is for children aged 3 and 4 years old and local authorities are required to provide a pre-school place for every child in this age group. However this is not mandatory and parents are not obliged to send their children to a pre-school establishment.

#### Primary school

This is for children aged 5 to 11 years old and is mandatory. There are 7 stages in Primary School from Primary (P) 1 to Primary 7. Pupils usually progress on an annual basis through these stages then move on to Secondary School which provides a comprehensive education for all pupils. This progression is not dependent on any set exam or assessment or on performance in class.

## Secondary school

This is for pupils aged 12 to 18 years old. There are 6 years or stages in Secondary School – S1 to S6. Attendance is mandatory until the pupils' 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, usually in S4, and then they can leave if they wish. However many stay on until 18 years old or the end of S6. Pupils follow a common course for S1 and S2 then they can choose which subjects they want to take for S3. There is ongoing assessment in these subjects with national exams called Standard Grades, usually at the end of S4. These can be sat and passed at different levels. Pupils then choose subjects again for S5 and S6 which they can study at different levels linked to their ability and for which they would sit an exam at the appropriate level for their course. The highest levels of these exams are Higher and Advanced Higher.

Primary and Secondary schools generally start teaching around 9am and finish around 3.00 to 3.30pm. They have to provide 5 hours tuition per day, Monday to Friday, for pupils. However schools are open both earlier and later than that for a range of extra curricular activities. Teachers work a statutory 35 hour week.

## Facts and figures

At present there are no national statistics or figures concerning the involvement of parents.

The Scottish Government and authorities collect a lot of information about pupils and their attainment but very little of this is broken down by ethnicity.

- Authorities usually have information about the numbers of ethnic minority pupils in each school – their languages, nationality, religion etc. This can be inaccurate due to relevant information not being collected on enrolment, inaccurate information being given by parents or entered by schools into electronic systems.

- The Scottish Government collects information annually from schools about the levels of English of their ethnic minority pupils – ScotXed Levels of English. These levels include
  - Stage 1: New to English
  - Stage 2: Early Acquisition
  - Stage 3: Developing Competence
  - Stage 4: Competent
  - Stage 5: Fluent

This has been happening for 2 years now but the system is still developing. The Government also collects information on the main home languages in schools and on ethnicity and free school meals.

- There has been a large increase nationally in support required for families of migrant workers over the last 2 years, putting pressure on EAL services as there has been no additional funding for more EAL staff.

There are no national figures showing the correlation between students with a migrant background and school achievement though these may be collected at a local level by some authorities.

## Projects and measures to foster parental involvement

Education authorities and schools require to implement the National Level legislation and approaches previously discussed.

### Authority level

All authorities have

- a Quality Improvement Officer with a remit for parental involvement
- a parent representative on the education committee
- a range of consultation mechanisms with parents including parent focus groups, parent forum and parent councils

## School level

- Parent Forum – all parents in a school are members of this
- Parent Council – a group of parents selected by members of the Parent Forum to represent all the parents at a school. The council might support the work of the school; represent parents' views to the head teacher, authority and HMIE; fundraise; organise events; help appoint senior staff etc.
- Parents as Partners toolkit (➔ [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/07091311](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/07091311)): The toolkit is in every Scottish school and is for use by parents, head teachers, school staff and local authority staff. Key areas covered are:
  - Learning at Home – information and support to help them develop their child's learning at home, in the community and at school
  - Home / School Partnership – actively involving parents in the life of the school and their children's education
  - Parental representation at school and authority level to express views and have these taken into account through the Parent Forum and Parent Council.
- Parent volunteers work in class / do activities with pupils; run after school clubs; set up websites; help run libraries; support fundraising for their schools etc.

## Projects and initiatives linked to ethnic minority parents

Some East Ayrshire projects and initiatives lead by the EAL Service in East Ayrshire are:

- Parent prompt leaflets in a range of languages to support parents in helping their children with early reading and number skills
- A bilingual version of the authority's nursery skills profile, showing ethnic minority children's ability and progress in their first language as

well as English. We also have translated versions of these profiles for some parents.

- A Bilingual Support Pack for Primary Schools and Nursery Schools with translations of common forms, standard letters, classroom signs etc. to help improve communication with parents
- A parents' workshop on how to help their children with early literacy and numeracy – see exemplary projects
- Provision of dual language books and story bags to develop home reading – see exemplary projects
- Bids for funding to allow us to employ Bilingual Support Assistants who speak a range of languages to support parental involvement in various ways – at parents' nights and other meetings; at transition stages eg. moving from nursery to primary; option choices eg. when their children are choosing subjects in secondary school. This often involves explaining systems and everyday matters rather than simply direct interpreting.

Collaboration and working with local groups of parents / local ethnic minority community groups e.g. Polish parents or the Chinese association, for a range of educational and community purposes. These include helping them to understand the Scottish Education system; improving communication between teachers and parents; providing an informal social venue for parents new to the area to meet and exchange information; supporting their involvement in their children's education; helping them develop their own skills.

## Detailed description of exemplary projects, measures or initiatives to foster parental involvement

1. Parents' Workshop on how to help their children with early literacy and numeracy

- All parents of children in nursery schools and the first year of primary school are invited into school so that the staff can explain how parents may support their child's literacy and numeracy at home.

The parents of ethnic minority pupils often do not go to these meetings for several reasons:

- One is they do not speak English well enough to understand the language being used at these meetings.
- Another is they do not feel comfortable going to meetings in school, either because they did not have a good experience at school themselves or because they feel they only need to go to the school if there is a problem with their child.
- Finally the meetings often take place in the evenings when ethnic minority parents are working.

### Aim

The aim of the workshop was to show the ethnic minority parents how they could help support their children's literacy and numeracy using their home language.

### Implementation

The first thing to consider was how to organise the meeting.

- It was decided to have the meeting on a Tuesday morning as most Chinese parents do not work on a Tuesday.
- It was decided to have the meeting from 10.00 – 12.00 as parents would not have to take children to school or collect children from school at that time.
- A venue was chosen in the middle of Kilmar-nock, near public transport so that it was convenient for all parents.

- A member of The Early Intervention Team (a team of teachers and nursery workers on secondment and working on special projects, particularly with pre-school children) was asked to come and explain how the parents could support their children using their own language.
- Two of our Bilingual Support Assistants, speaking Urdu and Cantonese, were asked to come to the meeting to translate for parents, where necessary.

A letter was then sent to all parents inviting them to the meeting. The letter was translated into the languages the parents spoke. The Bilingual Support Assistants were also requested to phone parents and explain, personally, the aim of the meeting.

On the morning of the meeting we met the parents and directed them to the venue. Many of the parents did come.

After a short introduction the member of the Early Intervention Team gave a presentation.

For help with literacy, she explained that they could use materials in their own language:

- reading books in their own language
- talking about the stories from their own country
- telling stories from their childhood
- teaching nursery rhymes from their own country
- playing games

For help with numeracy, she explained they could:

- count in their own language while doing everyday tasks such as counting their toys, shopping, putting plates on the table for dinner etc.

- use mathematical vocabulary while doing everyday tasks.
  - e.g. put the book beside the pencil
  - how many apples do we need?
  - which box is bigger?

We then showed the parents a short video of bilingual parents supporting their children through their home language. The video reinforced what had already been said.

At the end of the presentation the parents were given time to ask questions, sometimes through the Bilingual Assistants.

The parents were also shown the dual language story books and story bags which are mentioned in the next initiative.

## 2. Provision of dual language books and story bags to develop home reading

### Aim

The aim of a story bag is to involve parents in their child's education and give parents the confidence to enjoy books and reading with their child in their home language. Not every parent finds it easy to read stories, but with the supporting materials that the story bag offers, all parents can successfully share books with their child at a variety of levels.



Story bags consist of

- a colourful bag with the name of the story on the front
- a storybook in English and the child's home language
- games that go along with the book
- a simple sheet for the child to evaluate the book.

Story bags, in English, had been used in nursery and primary schools in East Ayrshire for several years.

A story bag is taken home for a week then brought back and exchanged.

While the story bag is at home the parents are expected to read and talk about the story with their child and to play any games included in the bag.

However the stories were all in English so ethnic minority parents who could not read English were unable to participate in this important activity.

We secured funding to buy dual language books and to make story bags.

### Implementation

The first task was to choose suitable books in the main languages spoken by our pupils.



At that time the main languages spoken by bilingual parents were Urdu / Punjabi and Cantonese so we concentrated on these languages. We ordered 12 dual language books to begin with.

The next task was to make the bags. We wrote to mothers asking for people who could come to our base one morning a week to sew the bags. Several of the ethnic minority mothers came on a Tuesday morning for several weeks to sew the story bags. Not only was this a good way of getting the bags made but it also provided a meeting place for the mothers. They were able to get to know each other and to talk to us in an informal setting.

Next we had to buy games and toys for the bags. A list of contents was made for each bag so that we would not lose any items.

Then letters were sent home in the parents' languages explaining how to use the story bags.

Parents who had attended the Parents' Workshop had seen them there.

The children each took a bag home for a week then returned it and took a new bag. The children were encouraged to fill in the simple evaluation sheet by putting in a happy face or a sad face.



The teacher kept a record sheet of which story bag each child took every week.

This is an ongoing project now as we are adding books in more languages as we receive new pupils from Poland, Russia, Spain and Romania.

Dual language books are also given out to older pupils now to read, in their home language, either with their parents or by themselves.

The dual language books also gave a member of our staff the idea of the pupils writing their own very simple dual language books.

The pupils write a simple story in English and the teacher makes it into a book. The book is then sent home and the parents are asked to write the story in the book in their home language. This not only produces a dual language book but links home and school. (⇒ [www.mantralingua.com](http://www.mantralingua.com))

### 3. Collaboration and working with a local group of parents

#### Aim

The main aim was to provide information on school and living in East Ayrshire to Polish parents who were new to the area. It was also to give them an informal social venue where they could meet as a group.

Last year East Ayrshire received its first Polish families, many of whom did not speak English. The children received support with English at school but there was no unified support in the community for the parents.

#### Implementation

The Secondary school with the largest number of Polish pupils invited those parents to an informal evening meeting with staff. A Polish interpreter was present.

Staff from the EAL Service also went to the meeting in order to explain the support the pupils would receive in school.

The meeting was well attended and the parents seemed keen to get to know each other and have more meetings.

It was decided that the school together with the EAL Service would set up a series of informal meetings with Polish parents and an interpreter.

The parents of all Polish pupils in East Ayrshire were invited to the next meeting and many of them came. At this meeting we invited a teacher who runs English classes for adults to come and talk to the parents about her classes. As a result of this many of the parents go to her class for 'beginners'.

There have been several more meetings where the topics covered have been:

- the Scottish education system
- advice on how to support their children's education
- the library service
- a talk from Strathclyde Police force on laws in Scotland

These meetings have been successful this session. At the last meeting the parents were given a questionnaire to fill in asking what topics they would like information on next session. There was a positive response to this.

The parents were also asked if they would be willing to help organize the meetings and a few said they would be.

This is very positive as we hope to encourage parents to organise the meetings themselves eventually.

## Glossary

In the Scottish context and in this report the following definitions apply:

**SEED:** Scottish Executive Education Department

**HMIe:** Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. They have been an integral part of the Scottish education system for over 160 years. They carry out inspections and reviews in educational establishments which, linked to the self-evaluation process, are central parts of the approach to quality improvement in Scottish Education.

**QIs:** Quality Indicators. These are sets of criteria which help schools to evaluate the quality of their performance in different areas of provision. They are also used by HMIe in their inspections of schools.

**HGIOS:** How Good Is Our School. The document produced by HMIe which contains all the Quality Indicators. All schools have a copy of this.

**Ethnic Minority:** Families with a first language / culture different to the host country.

**EAL:** English as an Additional language

**SEALCC:** Scottish EAL Coordinating Council. This is a national group representing all EAL services in Scotland. It is used for networking and development purposes.

**Bilingual Learners:** Pupils who function in more than one language in their daily lives. The term 'bilingual' emphasises that learners already have one language and that English is a second or additional language. The term does not imply an equal or specified level of fluency in two or more languages.

**Migrant:** Someone who has come to this country for work purposes. This may be through the European Economic Area (EEA i.e. the EU plus Norway, Iceland & Liechtenstein), the associate countries and outwith the EU.

**LTScotland or LTS:** Learning and Teaching Scotland. This provides advice, support, resources and staff development to the education community, creating a culture of innovation, ambition and excellence throughout Scottish Education.

### Useful links

⇒ [www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2006/09/08094112/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2006/09/08094112/0) – This gives guidance and further information for education authorities, Parent Councils and others on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. There are many informative links on this website.

⇒ [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk) – This is Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education's website. It contains useful information about HMIE, its reports, publications, examples of good practice etc.

⇒ [enquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk) – An email link to HMIE for specific enquiries.

⇒ [www.ltscotland.org.uk/resources/l/generic\\_resource\\_tcm4530612.asp?strReferringChannel=inclusiveeducation](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/resources/l/generic_resource_tcm4530612.asp?strReferringChannel=inclusiveeducation) – This takes you to the Learning in 2+ Languages document produced by SEALCC which outlines good practice for schools to ensure effective inclusion for bilingual learners and their families.

⇒ [www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk](http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk) – This website gives links to a range of information about Curriculum for Excellence.

⇒ [www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2006/09/07091311](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2006/09/07091311) – This website has links to all parts of the Parents as Partners in their Children's Learning: Toolkit. This is a practical resource to help parents and schools look at how they can work together in partnership. It accompanies the Guidance on the Parental Involvement Act.

⇒ [www.mantralingua.com](http://www.mantralingua.com) – The website belonging to Mantra Lingua, a UK based publishing house that supplies bilingual resources around the world.

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## United Kingdom



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