



A PARENT/CARER'S INTRODUCTION TO PARENT COUNCILS

This guide will help you understand what a Parent Council is and what it can do for you.

Who decides to set up a Parent Council?

It is up to the Parent Forum whether they want a Parent Council. A Parent Forum is made up of all the parents/carers with a child at the school so all parents are automatically members. The Parent Forum is the body which should appoint the Parent Council to run matters on its behalf. It also has the right to decide on the Parent Council's constitution. Any changes to the constitution or a new constitution need to be agreed at an AGM or EGM. Find out more in our [Constitutions Resource Pack](#)

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

The Parent Forum (all parents/carers of children at the school) can expect the following from the Parent Council (PC):

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

What are the main duties of the Parent Council?

The first responsibility of a Parent Council is to represent the views of parents at the school so that children's learning and experience of school is as good as it can be. Parents are the primary educators of their children so their involvement with children's learning is very important.

The specific activities of a Parent Council are not laid down in legislation so it is up to each Parent Forum to decide what they want their PC to do. This should be set out in the constitution. There are many things a Parent Council could get involved in, including:

- Supporting the work of the school, for example, by advising the school on its policies
- Being involved in the appointment of senior staff

- Helping parents support their child's learning
- Promoting contact between parents and the wider school community
- Discussing anything that's of interest to parents and ensuring the school management takes parents' views and experiences on board
- Ensuring all parents from different backgrounds are listened to and supported by the PC
- Organising social and fundraising events.

Can anyone become a member of the Parent Council (PC)?

Any parent with a child at the school can become a member of the Parent Council. Parents must always be in the majority on the PC and the Chair must always be a parent with a child at the school. The headteacher has a right and a duty to attend PC meetings but is not a member; they are there as an advisor. It is up to the Parent Forum to decide if there should be other members on the PC (eg from the wider community) and this should be detailed in the constitution, for example, appointing co-opted members who don't have voting rights but bring useful skills and experience.

How do I find out what my PC is doing?

If your Parent Council is communicating well with the Parent Forum, then you can expect to get information on its activities via newsletters, the school or PC website, social media, noticeboards etc. If this information is not reaching you, then why not ask the Parent Council about its methods of communication and whether these could be improved?

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

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

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

Yes. Parent Council meetings should be public meetings and open to all members of the Parent Forum. Of course, it is up to the Chair how the meeting is conducted and you may have to ask, or give advance notice, if you wish to speak at a Parent Council meeting. If you have an issue that you want to bring to the PC, then let the Chair know about this in advance so that it can be added to the agenda. The PC cannot take up individual parents' issues but you can ask the PC chair for advice about this eg raise a more general issue.

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

The first step would be to ask to see the constitution and check whether the Parent Council is

complying with this. You could contact the Parent Council informally to raise your concern to see if the matter can be resolved. The next step would be to put your comments on paper and write to the PC Chair (lodge a complaint). If you are still unhappy, then you could organise a group of the Parent Forum to ask the Parent Council for an answer/comment and ask how the issues raised are going to be addressed. You can also contact the headteacher and/or the local authority if the PC is not following its constitution or is not addressing your concern in a fair and open way. You can contact Connect for advice too.

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

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

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

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

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

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

My child has just started high school and the Parent Council seems to run in a completely different way to the one in the primary school. Is this right?

The main aim of the Parental Involvement Act was to make it easier for more parents to get involved in the life of the school and in their child's learning, and to make the organisation of groups like Parent Councils less formal and less prescriptive if that is what the Parent Forum wants.

It is recognised that parental involvement changes in secondary school, but the same legislation applies to Parent Councils in primary and secondary schools. The PC role is crucial in helping parents/carers to support their child and to become involved in the life of the school if they wish to.

[I have recently divorced and do not live with my children. I would still like to join the Parent Council; is this possible?](#)

Yes, of course - you are still a parent with a child at the school. In fact, 'parents' includes anyone with a parenting role such as parents who share care, foster or adoptive parents and kinship carers. The Parent Council also has a responsibility to be mindful of any looked-after children.

You are welcome to use information from this resource. However, if you do, please acknowledge Connect. We welcome your comments and feedback.

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