



GOOD PRACTICE

October 2007

Parents as Partners



Director of Education



Welcome to the new "Parents as Partners" newsletter which will give schools, parent bodies and partner agencies the opportunity to tell all about some of the exciting parental participation projects happening in their communities. These often simple but effective activities may provide ideas which will work well in your school and community and stimulate the interest and participation of many parents and carers.

There are three important areas to think about:

Learning at Home – Parents and carers are children's first and most important educators and make a tremendous difference to children's achievement. We will be interested to hear about projects which provide information and support which helps parents make the most of learning at home and in the community.

Home/School Partnerships – Tell us about the opportunities you provide which allow school, parents, families and the community to work together. Successful home/school partnerships depend on the development of mutual trust and respect between school and parents. Schools should provide a variety of experiences which meet the needs of all parents no matter their circumstances.

Parental Representation – The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 gives parents the right to receive information about their children's education, to be represented and have their views expressed through the Parent Council. There are many ways of gaining the views of parents and finding out what is important to them. Again there will be a great deal of interest in hearing what works well for you.

I am sure you will find the projects detailed in this first edition very interesting. We need to hear, however, what you are doing in order that we can celebrate some of the fantastic work taking place!



Welcome Packs

The Scottish Executive produced a very useful and successful Toolkit to guide Parent Council working parties, Headteachers and Education Services staff through the new legislation and help with the set up of the new Parent Councils.

Following on from that they have now produced a Parent Council Welcome Pack that is designed to help the new Parent Councils decide what issues are important in their school and what help and support the Parent Council can give the school to improve children's learning locally.

The Welcome Packs, which are being distributed in time for the first meeting of the new Parent Council, cover topics such as –

- What do we want to achieve?
- How can we involve more parents?
- How do we work together?

Additionally Falkirk Council Education Services are producing a 'who's who' guide to useful contacts locally to add to the pack.



Parental Involvement Team, McLaren House,
Marchmont Avenue, Polmont FK2 0NZ 01324 503810





Further Success - Persona Dolls



Parents of three schools within the Denny Integrated Learning Community have continued the success of the Kinneil Primary project. Parents of children attending Head of Muir, Antonine and Nethermains all met on a weekly basis to create dolls to be used by children as young as three to help them understand and empathise with children who are experiencing inequalities and discrimination.

The dolls produced are of an extremely high standard and reflect a diverse range of backgrounds and circumstances which were discussed and decided on by parents. Staff in all schools were delighted with the results and cannot wait to use them within their early years settings. Group tutor, Diane Davis Baillie (pictured with a sample of dolls) stated that "the parents have not only contributed to the curriculum but have played an important role in challenging discrimination in any form."

Dates for your Diary

19 & 20 November – Staff Development Days (schools closed)
 21 November - Service Performance Plan Meeting for Parents, venue t.b.c.
 21 December – End of Winter Term
 7 January 2008 – Start of Spring term
 14 & 15 February 2008 – Staff Development Days – schools are closed
 18 February 2008 – Term time public holiday
 12 March 2008 – Parents' Meeting – Budget – venue to be confirmed.
 All parents are invited to this meeting to talk about this year's Education Services budget and ask questions directly to the Education Services Management team.
 21 March 2008 – Good Friday – schools are closed.
 24 March 2008 – Easter Monday – schools are closed
 4 April 2008 – end of Spring term
 21 April 2008 – start of Summer term
 5 May 2008 – term time public holiday
 24 May 2008 – Annual Parents Conference – venue to be confirmed.
 All parents are invited to this annual themed conference to bring staff and parents together to help ensure an excellent education for children in the Falkirk Council area.
 27 June 2008 – end of Summer Term

The Jungle Story at Moray Primary School

Creative parents played an important role in ensuring that Moray Primary's production of "The Jungle Story" was a professional production worthy of a West End performance. Involvement was varied; some parents attended rehearsals on a weekly basis, others provided much needed practical help, for example producing masks, painting back-drops and scenery and making costumes. The school fitted in with the time parents could afford to give - sometimes during the school day, sometimes after school. This enabled a good cross section of parents to take part when it suited them.

On the evening of the performances parents were there to offer a helping hand as make-up artists, stagehands and to help calm nerves!

Sheena Wright - Headteacher





Soft Start at Stenhousemuir Primary School

Staff at Stenhousemuir Primary School are ensuring that parents are made fully aware of, and are experiencing the benefits of, the new "Soft Start" approach.

Staff wished to ensure that effective transition procedures were in place for pupils moving into P1 which is especially challenging as the school does not have a nursery attached.

Some pupils found it difficult to settle into a formal classroom setting and staff were concerned that the needs of these children were not being met. Staff also wanted to provide an opportunity for pupils to be involved in learning which could be demonstrated independently. It was also identified that the informal day-to-day contact with parents, an important part of nursery life which helps strengthen relationships, could be developed.

Pupils play for the first half hour of most mornings. The pupils choose the activity, the other pupils they wish to play with and can also spend time talking to the teacher. Pupils, staff and parents are all benefiting: for example pupils have real opportunities to socialise and try out previous learning in a play environment, staff have the opportunity to settle any pupils who may have experienced upset before arrival at school and parents are discovering that their child is settling in well and developing new friendships.

Parents have been involved each step of the way. The school's plans were highlighted at P1 inductions and curriculum evenings. Once pupils were familiar with the routines parents were invited to spend this time with their child.

There are also plans to allow for a change in procedures for parents bringing pupils to school. This will allow ongoing, informal communication between parents and highlight early concerns to staff. Consideration is also being given to changing the project name. "Ready, Steady, Learn" has been suggested which sounds upbeat and positive.

This approach is not new but is certainly meeting the needs of pupils, parents and staff alike.

Linda-Anne Reid - Headteacher

Parent Council News

Introducing Braes High Parent Council

Pictured are Braes High Parent Council members at their inaugural meeting on the 6th of June. The chair is Graham Bell (shown on the far right). The Parent Council is looking to appoint a Clerk – if anyone is interested in fulfilling this paid role – please contact Graham via the school.



Parent Council Clerks

Many Parent Councils have made provision to appoint a paid Clerk to help them with minutes of meetings, dealing with correspondence and generally helping them to communicate formally with parents as expected of them under the new legislation. If you have any clerical experience and you are interested in becoming a Parent Council clerk, please contact Diane Cherry (01324) 506602 or e-mail diane.cherry@falkirk.gov.uk for further information and to be put in contact with a Parent Council who has a vacancy.





Could You be a Childminder?

- Registered childminders offer quality care for children in a home environment.
- Childminding is a flexible service offering part time/full time and out of school care.

"It's the ideal homebased business"

There is a shortage of full time childminders in many areas of Falkirk. Why not find out more about Childminding.

Take the first step.

Call Gillian Paterson
on 01324 819345 for more information

Funded by Falkirk Council and Falkirk Working for Families.

Strengthening Partnerships at Blackness Primary School

Strengthening the partnership between home and school and providing parents with the opportunity to socialise were the main objectives of several workshops held in Blackness Primary before the summer holidays. In conjunction with Psychological Services, class teacher Heather Cullen found out the expectations parents had of the school and what they would need to support their children through their schooling. A number of issues were identified e.g. homework and resources, but the open and honest communication, in a relaxed setting, created an atmosphere of trust and co-operation. Creche was offered to help parents overcome childcare problems and healthy food (although it is believed that strawberry tarts were on the menu as a special treat) was available to ensure that no-one went hungry! This resulted in 70% of families being represented.

Parents' responses have been extremely favourable. They felt more relaxed about their children's learning, appreciated the opportunity to meet with each other and gained an increase in awareness of the school's perspective on a variety of matters.

It is hoped that workshops can be developed further in session 2007/2008.

Fiona Richardson - Headteacher





Way of Life at Carmuir's Primary School

Parents are actively involved in a variety of ways in the life of Carmuir's Primary School. Children showcase their learning on a regular basis during school assemblies which parents are invited to attend. The children have recited poetry, delivered "Powerpoint" presentations, acted, sung and demonstrated healthy living projects.

The school's Eco-Committee has also invited parents to help with the school garden and, as a result, two parents routinely visit to keep it neat and tidy, especially during the spring and summer months. Parents are also involved in other areas of the curriculum, for example parents of children in P1-P3 assist, check and re-issue games which help support literacy and numeracy at home. Information leaflets have also been produced which suggest ways parents can help their children's learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Last, but certainly not least, families have also had the opportunity to have fun together and raise funds for a good cause. Parents and children recently took part in a sponsored "Danceathon" and managed to raise an astounding £1,370 for Strathcarron Hospice.

This work will continue into the new school year and be enhanced by further projects which directly respond to the needs of the school and its community.

Caitlin Leiper - Headteacher

SEN Group

SEN stands for Special Educational Needs. The SEN group is a group of Mums who have children with additional learning support needs. They meet every Wednesday at Denny Community Flat from 9.30 am to 11.30 am.

They started as a support group and over the last year they have had visits from a wide range of people, workers from other support groups, school nurses, Parent Forums and Adult Education staff.

The group decided to make a video about their experiences of having a child with additional support needs.

In the video the group wanted to:

- Highlight how the parents deal with their children and discuss how they manage
- Talk about child's conditions and techniques that they find helpful
- Show in the video what's worked for them
- Explain how the simplest thing can make a huge difference

It is hoped that the DVD will be used as an educational tool for professionals and other parents.

Since the DVD has been made the group have met with various professionals to show their DVD. The DVD has been shown to Children's Commission Executive Group that will develop specific services for young people with autism and their families. The group will also be consulted in the plan for re-shaping Children's Services.

Contact:
Fiona McKeown
Community Training and Development Unit
01324 832040





Annual Parents Conference 2007

The 2007 Annual Parents Conference was, as in previous years, well attended and hailed a success by all present.

This year's topic was "Healthy, Happy and Active Children" which was developed in consultation with parents and partner agencies. The conference allowed parents to be introduced to the values, aims and key characteristics of Health Promoting schools and communicated the important contribution parents and schools can make to the well-being and achievement of children.

Participants were also given the opportunity to find out more about approaches to learning and teaching around the subject matter and were made aware of the sources of support available to maximise their families' health and well-being in the wider community.

Julia Swan, Director of Education, welcomed delegates to the conference and emphasised the important contribution parents and key partners make. The key-note speech was delivered by Bridget Doogan, Development Manager of the Health Promoting Schools Unit, and Ann McLaughlin, Senior Health Promotion Officer of NHS Forth Valley's Health Promotion Team. Parents also worked in small groups recording their ideas about healthy children, suggesting ways in which home and school can work together.

Before and after a soup and sandwich lunch, delegates were given the opportunity to attend one of ten workshops which were broadly representative of the services available for families across the Falkirk area.

The event finished on two extremely positive notes. Steve Frew, leading gymnast and Commonwealth champion, described his experience of reaching his potential and the support he received along the way and Falkirk Fusion, the area's cheerleading troop, gave an energetic and uplifting display.

Staff and parents alike are already looking forward to Conference 2008!





Wallacestone Primary School – Parent Helpers

Every session at Wallacestone we have a variety of parent/grandparent helpers who come in and support us in school. The first newsletter of the session invites anyone interested to come to a meeting in school. At this meeting everyone is given a form to complete giving details of when they are available, any “talents” they have and any preferences for stages of the school. This session we have had a core of 12 mums and grans (some years dads and grandpas) who have worked with us all session.

Some of the jobs they do:

- Organise and run the Healthy Tuck Shop with Primary 7’s
- Take groups of children to the library in school
- Work on listening and talking in infant classes
- Create displays
- Organise Primary 1 reading books each week
- Work in class on art/craft activities with pupils
- Come on outings/walks with classes.

For the past two sessions we have had two mums who have come in every week and supported our Specialist Craft Teacher with all classes. They basically work a day and half each week for us (for free!).

At other times in the year we have had parents coming in to talk about the jobs they do. Our Primary 3’s had a Grandparents Afternoon where ‘Grandparents’ were invited in to school to talk about life when they were children. Primary 3 organised the whole afternoon, from group work for the Grandparents to refreshments at the end of the day.

This is just a flavour of things that happen with parents here. This new session we will be inviting parents on to our Eco Group and looking for parents to help us set up a SNAG (School Nutrition Acton Group).

Anne Kerr – Principal Teacher



St Francis Parents Association – Supporting the School and Nursery



The parents, staff and children at St Francis Primary School have worked together throughout the year supporting the Parents Association with their fundraising ideas.

Children at the nursery have not missed out on the fun. They celebrated the end of term with a super fun day funded by the Parents Association. 66 pupils enjoyed bouncy castles, slides, obstacle courses, football coaching, face painting, hair glitter and temporary tattoos. Parents, staff and Primary 7 pupils were on hand to help the nursery children throughout the day.

The Parents Association could not have funded this event without the support of the all parents/carers at the school and the nursery.

Thanks also go to Falkirk Football Club for providing the football coaching, Gems Sweet Shop who donated lunch boxes, sweets and drinks, Tesco who provided fresh fruit, Johnny Bannerman and Lindsay McCutcheon from Top Start and the Fire Brigade and Police who came along with Fire engines and Police cars.

This year, the Parents Association have subsidised all the school trips and purchased new stage lighting for the school. Look out for the next event and come along to join other St Francis School parents at the new Parent Council meetings and join in the fun

Contacts for more information on the fun day are Claire Wilson and Anne Douglas in the nursery on (01324) 508570.





Carron Primary School – Parent Partnership Project

Carron Primary was very lucky in securing a grant from Learning and Teaching Scotland for a Parent Partnership Project. Susanne McCafferty, Depute Headteacher, organised four workshops for parents around the theme of Valuing Parent Involvement in Accelerated Learning. The parents had the opportunity to participate in a variety of workshops all focusing on 'Learning to Learn' one of the school's new initiatives. The workshops were delivered by professionals who would normally deliver to school staff through in-service training. The providers and workshops were The Learning Game 'Can Do, Will Do', Learning Unlimited – 'Ticks and Tricks for Parents' and 'Helping Young People to Learn' and 'Maths on Track', who have delivered workshops in the school before. This time the parents worked alongside their children on 'Problem Solving'. These workshops allowed parents the opportunity to develop skills that will enable them to understand and engage with their children when talking about their learning.

The responses from the parents were very positive and many remarked that it changed their views on how their children learn, and how they learn differently from one another.

The children who attended the workshops stated that they were happy that their mums and dads had seen how they go about their school work and had listened to their ideas.

Lynn Orr - Headteacher



Family Learning Groups Supported by the Youth Learning Team

From April this year my post as community worker within the youth learning team has offered education based courses to families who have young people involved with the integrated pupil support initiative within High Schools Falkirk wide.

I have begun working with a group of parents (all mothers) in the Tryst Centre in Stenhousemuir, looking at issues affecting their everyday lives and programming relevant learning opportunities through fun sessions.

Through these sessions the parents are recognising their value and exploring ways to engage with their children in a more productive way. The benefits are already evident, with some mothers noticing positive changes in their relationships at home. The group due to form Falkirk wide will encourage pro-active participation by parents and young people encouraging joint group work and programme planning, also the long term possibilities of residential experiences for all the families involved.

I am consulting with other agencies such as Social Services and Integrated Learning Community Teams to provide a well informed approach to the families needs and raise awareness of their issues and concerns.

I can see a very good outcome for all the families who participate. It has had the effect of empowering parents to take back some control of their families' welfare, and given them confidence to become more involved within their communities.

Mhairi Ollier, Community Worker, Youth Learning Team, Municipal Chambers

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For further information on any of the above mentioned articles please contact the relevant person detailed in each piece or Anne Stewart, Parents Initiative Coordinator on 503810 or anne.stewart@falkirk.gov.uk.

