

Making the difference

Getting involved in your child's school



Parents, carers and family members are by far the most important influences on their children's lives. By becoming involved in the life of your child's school you can show your child that their education is important to you. At the same time, by sharing your knowledge, experience or skills you will be helping to make the school a successful, welcoming place supported by, and well connected with, the local community. There are many different ways you can get involved, so there is likely to be something that will suit you.



How can I help the school?

There are all sorts of ways parents can help, either on a regular basis or just occasionally. Most schools have parents' groups and they might be able to advise how you can help the school. Or you could ask a teacher.

Daytime

- ▶ If you're free during the day, you can become involved by helping with certain activities such as art classes, the school library or sports days. Many schools have parent helpers who work on a rota to help teachers in the classroom. Schools usually look for volunteers to help out on occasional class trips and they may need parents to help out with breakfast, lunchtime or after-school clubs.

Evenings or weekends

- ▶ If you're not available during the day, you could help with evening or weekend activities such as school discos, plays, concerts, summer fairs or other events. Parents' groups welcome new volunteers to help with fundraising and other activities.

Sharing different skills

- ▶ You will have skills that you can share with the school. If you have green fingers, you could help in the school garden or bring in plant cuttings for the classrooms. If you are artistic, the school might be looking for someone to help the children design and paint a wall frieze or a welcoming display at the school entrance. If you enjoy baking, why not pass on your skills to a group of children? If you are an electrician, could you help out at the science club or supervise the stage lighting for a school play? If you like reading, you could offer to help children on a one-to-one basis with the school's paired reading scheme. Schools are always looking for people who are willing to share their skills with young people.

Sharing different cultures

- ▶ Parents from different cultural backgrounds can talk to children about their own culture. Children are often fascinated to hear about different backgrounds. You might feel able to organise English language lessons to help both parents and pupils. Or you might offer to translate school materials or make tapes in your first language to help other parents and pupils who are learning English.

Talking about your own experiences

- ▶ Your own life experiences can help children to understand topics being studied in school. For instance, grandparents or older relatives who lived through the Second World War could talk to a class about rationing. If you work somewhere such as a fire station, factory or supermarket, perhaps you could help to arrange a class visit to your workplace.

Helping the school from home

- ▶ If you don't have much time to come into the school, there are still ways you can help out at home by making costumes for a school play, making posters to advertise a school event or producing tickets, programmes or other documents on a computer.

Formal parents' groups

- ▶ There are also more formal and structured ways in which parents can become involved such as through the School Board, PTA or other parents' groups. This can involve decision making about school policies or it can involve practical support and help. There are also opportunities to get involved more formally by representing other parents.

How will my child benefit?

When children see their parents or other family members getting involved in the school, it:

- shows them that you are interested in what the school is doing
- lets them see that you value what they are learning
- gives them a sense of security
- helps them learn about good citizenship from your example.

How will I benefit?

- You will get to know the teachers and other parents
- You will gain a better understanding of how the school works
- You will see how your child relates to other children and teachers
- You will be setting a good example to young people
- You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are making a contribution to the school and to your and other children's learning.

How will the school benefit?

- It gives the school a wider range of experience and skills to draw on.
- The school will develop a better understanding of parents and the community.
- Teachers will be grateful for the extra help.

Your child's school will have certain procedures to follow for involving parents in school activities. Contact the school for more details.

You can find more information about getting involved in schools, or any aspect of Scottish education, on Parentzone. **www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk**

Useful links and contacts

Parentzone www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

Scottish Parent Teacher Council Tel: 0131 226 4378 www.sptc.info

Scottish School Board Association Tel: 01387 260428
www.schoolboard-scotland.com

BBC Parents www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

Childcare Link Tel: 0800 096 0296 www.childcarelink.gov.uk

One Parent Families Scotland Tel: 0800 018 5026 www.opfs.org.uk

Parentscentre www.parentscentre.gov.uk

ParentLine Scotland Tel: 0808 800 2222 www.children1st.org.uk/parentline

Parent Network Scotland Tel: 0131 555 6780
www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk

Enquire (The Scottish advice service for additional support for learning)
Helpline: 0845 123 23 03 Textphone: 0131 222 2439 www.enquire.org.uk

This leaflet is the tenth in a series which highlights the real difference parents can, and do, make to their children's learning. Together with the local advice you will have on the arrangements in your child's school, this series will offer information to help you become better involved in your child's education. Other published leaflets are on Homework, Sharing information, Parents' evenings, School holidays, Starting a new school year, Healthy choices, Out-of-school learning, Enterprise in education, New technology in learning and Personal learning planning. The series also includes materials for schools and teachers on these topics.

If you would like to contact us, or suggest topics for future leaflets, please visit www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk, or telephone 0131 244 0956. This leaflet will be available in community languages and alternative formats from your child's school and the Parentzone website.

This series is prepared in partnership with the Quality in Education Centre (University of Strathclyde) and Children in Scotland.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE