

Ensuring that both you and your child are fully involved in making decisions relating to their education can have a hugely positive impact on their learning experiences.

Making sure you are well supported to do this is

one area where local authorities need to make improvements, according to a new report from the HMIE. This newsletter brings you news of this major new report and offers information that can help you make sure your child is being properly supported to get

involved in decision-making at school.

We are also pleased to announce that bookings are now being taken for our annual conference - see details below.



Sally Cavers



Anne Lennon

Report on the implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

Over the past two years, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) has been monitoring how well Scotland's 32 local authorities have implemented a new law to improve support for children who require extra help at school.

The report concludes that, overall, local authorities are better at ensuring children receive a more personalised education to suit their individual needs. It also highlights several areas where improvements are needed.

The report found:

Better learning opportunities for children

- authorities are better at ensuring all children and young people receive a personalised education
- authorities have recognised the importance of providing the right support for a child early on
- partnership working between schools and other agencies such as health and social work is beginning to have a positive impact on children's experiences at school
- within schools, professionals such as school nurses, family support workers and home-school link officers are working closely with teachers to improve services for children and families

Room for improvement

- different local authorities have different ways of looking at additional support for learning law which is leading to inconsistencies in how the law is put in place
- there are inconsistencies in how local authorities manage decisions about co-ordinated support plans for children who need them
- fully effective systems have yet to be put in place to make sure that the most vulnerable young people do not miss out on opportunities for education and training

It found that although most parents felt their children were well supported by schools, they were not well informed about how the concept of 'additional support needs' differs from the previous concept of 'special educational needs'. The term 'additional

support needs' is much broader. It applies to any child or young person who, for whatever reason, requires additional support to learn and reach their full potential. This could apply to children who are being bullied, are particularly gifted, or have experienced a bereavement, as well as those with behavioural or learning difficulties, or specific disabilities such as deafness.

The HMIE also found that parents were not well informed about their new rights under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act to be involved in making decisions about their child's education, nor clear about the different kinds of support plans available for children who need extra help. For example, some local authorities use their own plans for children in their area as well as co-ordinated support plans (CSPs) and individualised educational programmes (IEPs). The study found that parents were confused about the status of these.

The Scottish Government and all services for children, including schools and education authorities will be expected to act on the HMIE's report by making necessary improvements.

The full report *Report on the implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act* can be downloaded at www.hmie.gov.uk

Enquire conference 2008

Limited number of subsidised places for parents at the Enquire annual conference 2008.

Curriculum for Excellence
28th February 2008,
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall

The Curriculum for Excellence is the first full scale review of the curriculum in Scotland, and will create a single streamlined curriculum for all children and young people between the ages of three and 18.

This conference will examine how the Curriculum for Excellence relates to children and young people with additional support needs.

Call Gavin Crosby on 0131 222 2422 for further information.



Getting children involved in decisions about their education



Helping to ensure that your child is really involved in decision-making at school can have a hugely positive impact on their overall experience of learning.

They may be involved at a variety of levels, from helping to set targets for their own personal learning to making decisions that will affect the whole school. Involvement at any level can increase their confidence, improve personal and communication skills and motivate them to learn.

The structures that your child's school has in place to help pupils get involved, and the commitment of staff, are essential. Enquire's latest guide *Involving children and young people in decisions about their education* focuses on the issue. It has mainly been written as a resource for education staff, but you may also find it useful as a resource to help your child.

**The following information has been sourced from Enquire's latest guide *Involving children and young people in decisions about their education*.

Why should your child be involved in decisions that affect their education?

Meaningful involvement can:

- motivate children to learn
- make pupils feel part of, and proud of, their school
- improve relationships between school staff and pupils
- help teachers develop their practice and support their pupils

- help children develop their views and values and understand the views and values of others
- teach children how to exercise their rights and respect the rights of others
- develop children's and young people's communication skills
- teach children how to work in partnership with others

How can I help ensure that my child is involved and able to influence the direction of their education?

Children need adults to help them learn how to exercise their rights and the school that they attend should have systems in place that provide opportunities for your child to be asked for their views, be listened to, make choices and be able to influence decisions that are made.

Methods currently used in schools include:

- **Pupil councils** – Forums where pupils are asked about how their school is run. Your child may find the idea of being on a council and speaking in front of a group of people daunting but it may be worth encouraging your child to find out more about their own school's council. Getting involved in this way in the running of their school can help build their confidence and self-esteem.
- **Suggestion boxes** – Useful for children who want to express their views on a matter but feel unable to do so face-to-face.

- **Review meetings** - Meetings involving you, your child and school staff provide an opportunity to ask your child for their views and explore ways that their views and ideas can be taken into account.

- **Personal Learning Planning** – A process that allows children to be involved in setting their own targets and goals for learning. It is described “a conversation” about learning that involves you, your child and their teacher. Taking part in personal learning planning can help your child develop a greater responsibility for their own learning and improve their confidence and self-esteem.

- **Pupil conferences** – Bring larger numbers of school pupils together to debate a specific issue. These can be held at school level, or local authority level, bringing together pupils from different areas.

- **Guidance system** – Most schools have a guidance teacher who can help your child make choices about their future during times of change. They might discuss subject choices, further education and career opportunities.

- **Peer tutoring, mentoring or buddy systems** – Children can feel more comfortable and confident in expressing themselves with their peers.

- **Web technology** – Some schools have an online chatroom, voting forms, blogs, podcasts, and message boards for pupils to use. These can be a very rewarding and powerful way for them to share their views and get responses from others. It also gives schools the chance to teach pupils about responsible and safe use of the internet.

- **Incentives and rewards** – Incentives and rewards are not the same as bribes. Your child should always get involved voluntarily. But everyone needs a reason to participate in any

process and can help to remind them of the rewards. Real incentives include the chance to make a difference on an issue they feel is important, to have some positive attention from an adult, to gain new skills, to get a reference for when they leave school or to do something for their CV. Getting to go to a nice or interesting place, being served good food, meeting new people in similar or very different situations and perhaps making new friends are things children have told Enquire they really value.

- **Focusing on solutions** – Children with additional support needs may respond particularly well to an approach to tackling problems that focuses on solutions. This includes recognising their strengths and resources, identifying circumstances when things go better and looking at goals for the future and how to reach them.

Education staff, and others working with children are encouraged to continuously assess whether existing methods and structures are working. As parents, you can ask these questions too. Is your child getting the help they need to really say what they think at review meetings, and are they listened to? Does the school's pupil council represent the views of all pupils, or only a select few? Do teachers have enough time for their guidance role? Does your child believe it is worth raising an issue at school, or do they believe that nothing will be done?

Education staff may want to consult with you to find out the best ways of ensuring your child has the opportunity to get involved. As their parent you are well placed to know what's needed to make sure your child has a say on issues that affect them.

Children who are less confident or well known among their peers, and children whose communication or behaviour difficulties mean they need support to participate, are particularly likely to have their views overlooked. Schools need to make sure that every pupil can raise an issue and feel it will be fairly considered.



Other relevant Enquire resources

Parental participation in meetings (factsheet)

Outlines what education authorities and schools *must* and *should* do to involve parents of children with additional support needs in their child's education.

Round the table — a guide to going to meetings

Tips to help children and young people get involved in meetings.

What are additional support needs?

An introduction to this concept, with information about what the child or young person can do if they need extra help.

Download these resources and view a full list at www.enquire.org.uk. Click on 'publications'.

Involving children and young people in decisions about their education

A guide about involving children and young people with additional support needs in decision-making, from whole-school issues to personal learning and support. Written mainly as a resource for education professionals, but may be helpful to anyone who wants to help children and young people to take part, including parents/carers, health and social work professionals, youth workers and children's charity workers.

Free order or download at www.enquire.org.uk or phone 0131 222 2425



Enquire helpline: 0845 123 2303

Opening hours: Monday 9am - 5pm ● Tuesday 9am - 7pm ● Wednesday 9am - 5pm ● Thursday 9am - 7pm ● Friday 9am - 5pm

Celtic nations autism partnership launched

Three of the biggest autism charities in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland have combined forces under the banner of the Celtic Nations Autism Partnership (CNAP) to raise awareness and advance the cause of autism.

The chief executives of leading autism charities in the UK's devolved nations spoke passionately about the opportunities presented by this cross-national partnership to pool resources, share good practice and information and make a difference to the lives of children and their families.

Adam Ingram, minister for children and early years said at the launch event on November 7: "It is clear that there is a lot of good work being done at both national and local levels, with many thousands of committed teachers, social workers, care workers, health staff and voluntary organisations working hard to build better services. But it is equally clear that there remains much to be taken forward if we are to achieve effective outcomes for all as a matter of right."

*Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the most common additional support need asked about in calls to the Enquire helpline team. In the third quarter of 2007, nearly 17 per cent of all calls to the helpline related to ASD.

Skill Scotland: supporting your child into further study

Going to college or university can be an exciting, but daunting experience for your child, particularly if they have a disability and/or require any kind of additional support.

Skill Scotland aims to help disabled people across Scotland to maximise their potential in learning and employment. It offers information and advice on a range of issues, including:

- applying to college or university
- funding and benefits information, including the Disabled Students Allowance
- any additional support your child may require as a student
- your child's rights under the Disability Discrimination Act

All information booklets are available on the Skill website at www.skill.org.uk/info/infosheets.asp. Access the Scotland pages at www.skill.org.uk/scotland.

Skill Scotland's helpline operates from 1.30pm to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday.

Freephone helpline: 0800 328 5050
(please note that this number is only free from landlines; mobile users should call 0131 475 2348.)
or **e-mail:** admin@skillscotland.org.uk

Download or order all of these resources at www.enquire.org.uk/pcp/publications.php

Drive to improve support for children with communication impairments

A group set up to ensure children's interests are recognised in the Scottish Parliament has chosen 'communication and language' as one of two key themes for special focus during 2007/08.

53,000 children and young people have communication support needs (CSN) in Scotland, and there is, it is claimed, a great need for better and more speech and language therapy provision.

The cross party group for children and young people, which brings together groups and individuals dedicated to promoting children's rights as well as politicians from across different political parties, will host three meetings held over the next year to discuss the subject. The Scottish Parliament is committed to acting on issues raised by the cross party group.

Kim Hartley and Fiona Whyte from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) said communication impairment is the most common disability presented in early childhood. Children with communication support needs can have difficulty with understanding, expressing themselves, the functions of language, and interacting with others.

Enquire receives a significant number of enquiries every year from parents who have children with communication and language difficulties and who are having difficulty with educational support and hopes some beneficial recommendations will be made for support. The first meeting on communication and language will take place on Thursday 13 December.

For further information, and to request copies of the minutes of the meetings, email dpatterson@childreninscotland.org.uk

'Parents will be able to make placement requests to other authorities' – First Minister

Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond, has reassured parents that children with additional support needs will be able to make placement requests to schools outwith their local authority area.

His reassurance follows a Court of Session ruling in November that a mother whose son has additional support needs did not have the right to make a school placing request to another local authority. Her lawyers argued that the reference in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 to making a placing request "to an education authority" applied to any local authority. But Lord Macphail ruled that this meant an applicant's own local authority. An appeal against this interpretation to the House of Lords is expected.

Alex Salmond told the Scottish Parliament: "It is the intention of the Scottish Government to ensure that the parents of children with additional support needs are able to make placement requests to schools outwith their local authority area."

He added: "We will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that parents of children with additional support needs are able to make placement requests to schools outwith their local authority area."