

Fife Parental Involvement Strategy

(Schools Edition, 2017)



Introduction

In Fife, we recognise that the first and foremost educators of any child are their parents and the most effective way to support our children and young people is for schools and families to work together in close partnership.

This strategy is a requirement of *The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006*. It is aligned with Education Scotland's *How Good is Our School 4* (HGIOS4) and *How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare*. It is in line with the legislative requirements of the *Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act, 2014*. In Fife there are a number of key drivers to improve partnership working and positive outcomes for children / young people and their families, for example the Early Years Framework; Children's Service plan priorities (HGIOELC).

The strategy reflects the views of Fife parents, schools and partners gathered through a range of consultation activities. Feedback has influenced the content of the strategy and a number of examples of good practice are highlighted to support more effective parental involvement between home; school and community. It offers support and challenge to further strengthen those partnerships.

Aim

The aim of the Parental Involvement strategy is to improve home- school partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Impact of the strategy depends upon each individual school's response to the challenges being posed. This involves identifying aspects of non-engagement within school's individual communities, consideration of potential barriers to involvement, and exploration of new, creative ideas and solutions.

Core Elements

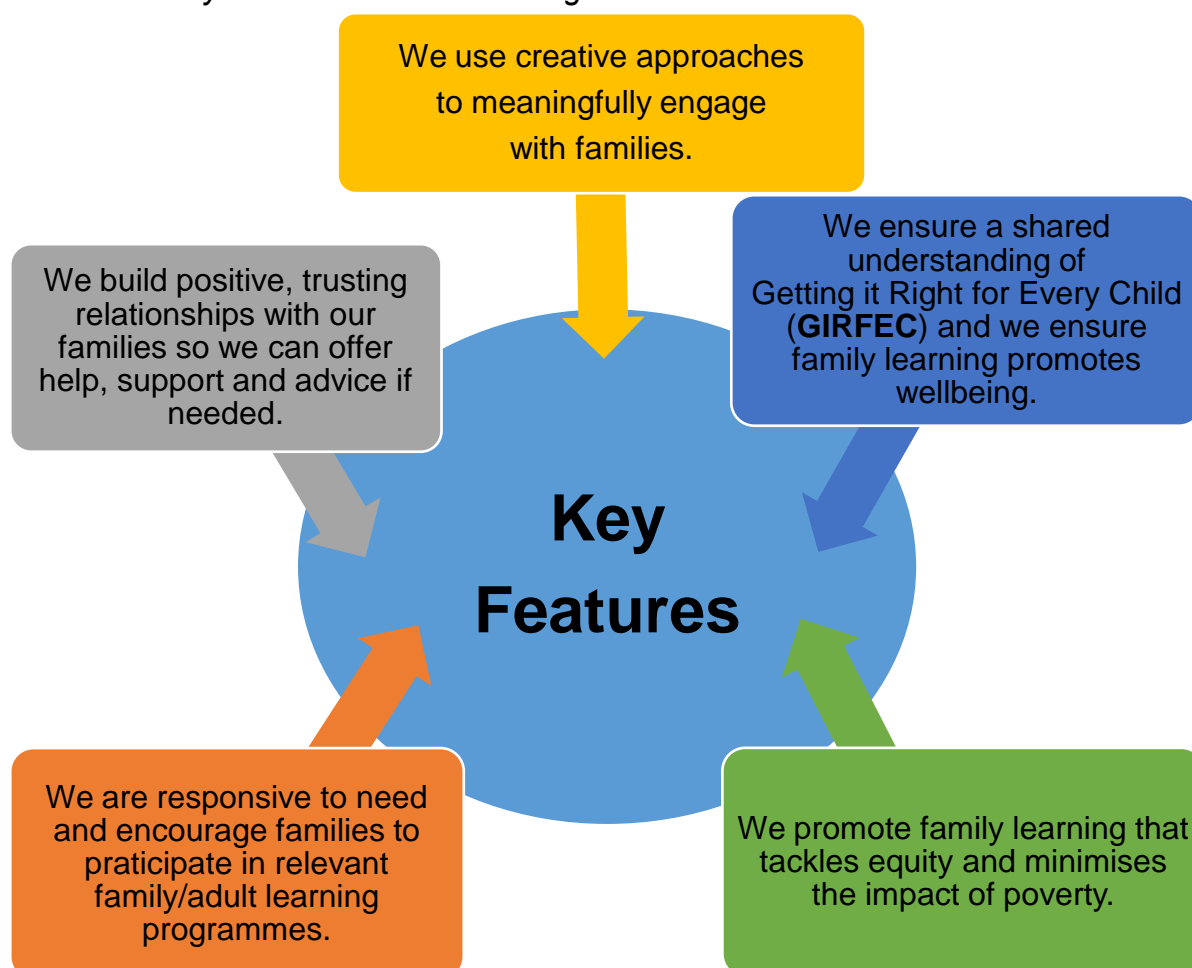
This strategy is organised into the following four core elements, each supported by key features of effective partnership working, examples of practice in action, with HGIOS challenge questions posed.

- **Family Learning**
- **Home-School Partnership**
- **Parental Representation**
- **Learning at Home**

FAMILY LEARNING

HGIOS4/HGIOELC 2.5 FAMILY LEARNING

“This indicator focuses on increasing the positive impact of working with families to improve learning and achievement. The emphasis is on schools working in partnership with others in the community to support families to secure better outcomes through programmes which enable them to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.”



Family Learning programmes which offer activities for family members to learn together through intergenerational learning can increase confidence and foster positive attitudes to learning that might lead both adults and children to engage in further educational opportunities. This strategy acknowledges the importance of a strong partnership between the Community Learning and Development (CLD) and its use of the [Family Learning Practice Framework](#).

Key Themes:

- Engaging families in learning
- Early intervention and prevention
- Quality of family learning programmes

Example of family learning in action in a Nursery/ Primary School context:

"We have a free breakfast club which is open daily for all children and families. We have 2 sessions a week where there are structured games and activities set out for the families to use together. Having time to spend eating and interacting around the table is an important aspect for many of our families. It is also another time when they can be involved with Literacy and Numeracy activities with their child."



This opportunity has helped our parents see that learning can take place in every day activities

Example of family learning in action in a Primary School context:

"Family Fridays happen every week with a 3 week rotation for different stages. Families are invited into class for breakfast and to spend the time involved in activities which are linked to their child's homework, which they can replicate at home. Our homework policy has been changed to be less formal. Now reading is sent home every week as well as termly 'Parent Prompts' for topic. We also send home ideas for Literacy and Numeracy tasks at home. These encourage our families to learn together and spend quality family time both at home and in school. We have a lending library of resources such as games and books that can also be borrowed during Family Friday. This is run by parents who co-ordinate the lending out of resources and also the return of them the following week."



Evaluations from both parents and children have been positive and more parents are now involved in their child's learning and feel included in the process

Example of family learning in action through partnership working between the Family and Community Support Team (FACST) and a Primary School:

“FACST and school staff organised 6 weeks of activities after school to engage families who had expressed some difficulties with managing their children’s behaviour.

These after school activities proved to be a huge success for parents who not only were given the opportunity to engage with their children through play but also had access to other beneficial organisations, including Cosy Kingdom, Credit Union and Adult Learning.

The children were given the opportunity to experience new activities and at the same time were able to do these with their parent/s which both parties reported improved their relationships and understanding of each other.

FACST were able to sign post the families to other appropriate programmes at the end of the 6 weeks and found that parents were keen to attend these with their children.

The overall feedback from parents and children was that they were sorry the 6 weeks had come to an end as they had gained so much and their relationships had positively improved.”



Of the 8 families who participated, all went on to receive additional support from one of the partners who supported the programme. Impact included improved attendance, access to benefits and joining a holiday cycling programme

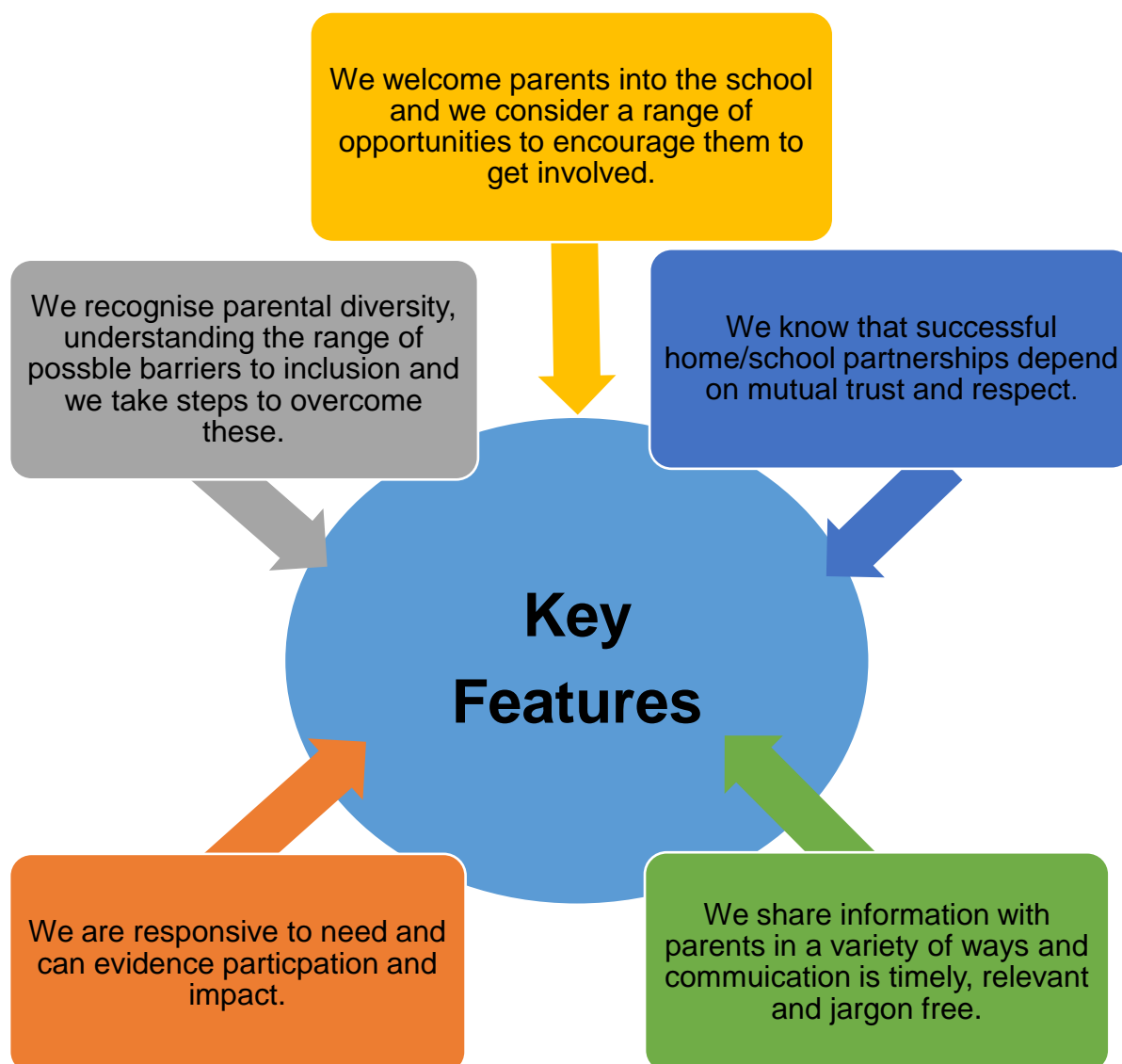
Challenge Questions:

- **How would you describe family learning in your own context?**
- **How do you know which parents /families might need support and how would you decide which support best meets their needs?**



HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Effective home-school partnerships happen when we involve our parents in their child's education and in the life of the school. It is important to seek opportunities for family engagement so that parents understand the purpose of education and are able to support their child to make informed choices at pivotal points throughout their education.



What if parents can't always be involved in the life of the school?

It is recognised that parental involvement may be influenced by circumstances such as working patterns, childcare arrangements, language needs, disability, self-confidence and past experiences relating to education.

Parents not always being involved does not mean they aren't interested in their children. It is important to know and understand the challenges and barriers that exist within each school community in order to come to creative solutions that address and meet need.

The most significant positive difference to parental involvement is to build relationships with parents seeking views and ideas that would further enhance home – school partnership so you can reduce barriers and support them if they need it.

Example of home-school partnership in action in a Secondary School context:

"Parental engagement is a big focus for us because we know the difference involving parents in their child's learning and school life makes to outcomes."

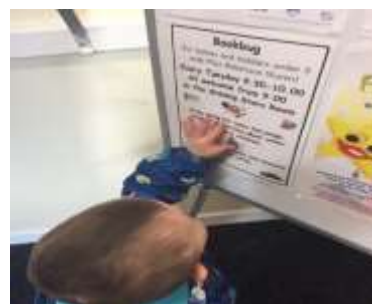
As of Christmas 2016, we have been using Microsoft Sway to create the school's termly newsletter. This is embedded within the website, Facebook and Twitter and a link is sent to parents and carers via Groupcall text message. Parental response has been very positive and the school has benefited not only from this but notable savings to printing costs."

There are many reasons why it is difficult for our parents to engage and therefore we are always looking for ways in which to share information in an easy, parent friendly and accessible manner. Our use of the school website and one-way social media such as Facebook and Twitter has helped hugely.



Example of home-school partnership in action in a Nursery context:

“By offering a wide variety of groups to parents and children including Bookbug, and Peep sessions, parents who felt isolated previously now have both professional and peer supports in place. We communicate the range of sessions on offer through texts and social media and also through displays at Parents Evenings. Uptake has been very positive.”



These groups have not only helped to involve families in the school and the learning but have also supported some parents in making new relationships with each other.

Example of home-school partnership in action in a Primary School context:

“Communication can be a major barrier to parental involvement. At our school, we promote the slogan ‘Get connected to keep informed!’ We help parents keep up to date with what is going on in school in a number of ways. Parents can:



- *Receive regular text alerts.*
- *Add the school website to their online favourites.*
- *Sign up to the school social media links (e.g. Facebook & Twitter) and download the apps.*
- *Find out about school closures through the council text alerts system ([Click Here for more information](#))*

Parents are encouraged and enabled to share with the school, any requirements for assistance, such as:

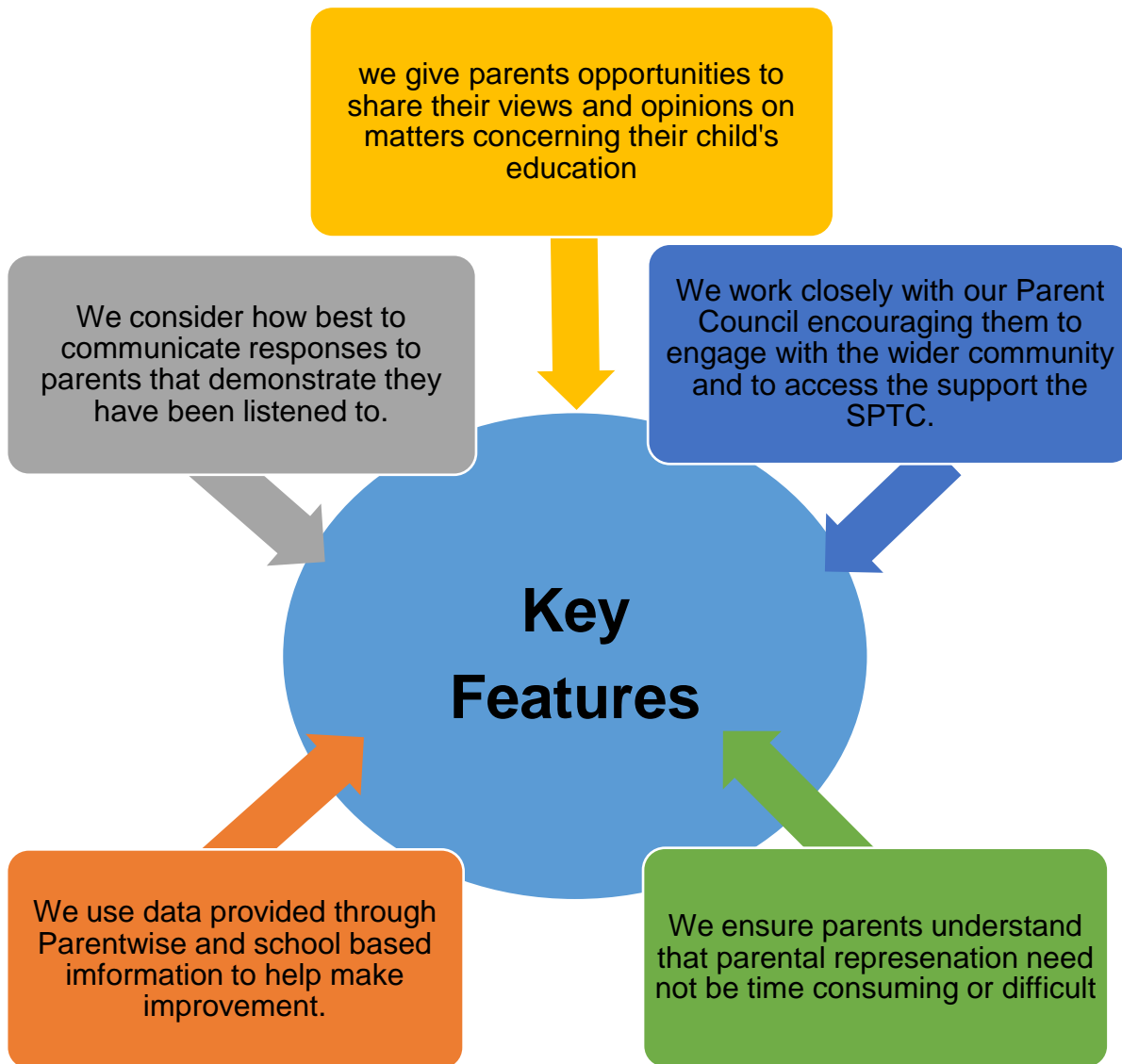
- *Having a disability that will require consideration in order to come in to school.*
- *English is not the families’ first language and a translation service may be required to ensure parents fully understand what is happening and how they can get involved in school.*



One of the easiest impacts to measure has been the response from texts when communicating information. Parent responses have increased and there are fewer calls about not receiving information.

Parental Representation

Parental representation is the term used to describe how parents' views influence matters affecting the education of their children.



Gathering parental views is only an initial step in the process, what happens next is what makes the difference. Parents should not only feel their views are listened to but that these are taken account of and further, it is essential that parents feel informed of what happens as a result of them sharing their views. This process can be simply described as:

You **said**...

We **listened**...

We **did**...

We **let you know** ...

What is the 'Parent Forum' and what do Parent Councils do?

Having a child at school automatically makes the parent a member of the **Parent Forum**. This is the term used for all parents linked to a school through their children. The **Parent Council** is a group of parents who represent the Parent Forum, as well as representatives from the school such as the Headteacher, and can include other invited parties. The Parent Council are able to:

- Ensure that parents are represented in all areas of school-based decision-making.
- Support the work of the school.
- Gather and represent parents' views to the Head teacher, the local authority and to Education Scotland during periods of inspection.
- Facilitate contact between the school, parents, pupils, providers of Early Education and the local community.
- Fundraise and organise events.
- Be involved in the appointment of senior members of staff

See Education Scotland's Toolkit - click on the link: [Parental Representation Toolkit](#)



Fife works in partnership with the **Scottish Parent Teacher Council** to support Parent Councils and schools and to ensure they have access to a wealth of information and advice. The SPTC has a very helpful website which provides materials on a range of subjects such as National Qualifications, fundraising and what to expect at Parent Council meetings. The website also offers links to other important areas within education, as well as on-line distance learning opportunities for practitioners and contact details for a telephone/email advice helpline.

[Click on this link to access the Scottish Parent Teacher Council Website \(SPTC\)](#)

Pupilwise and Parentwise Surveys

In Fife we are committed to making sure that children, young people, parents and carers have their say about our nurseries and schools and also to feel that their views are listened to and acted upon. To help with this, we have two large scale online surveys called Pupilwise and Parentwise.

The surveys take place every third school session and thousands of people take part across Fife. The surveys identify key strengths and areas for development which directly inform and influence improvement planning in schools and at authority level.



Example of parental representation in action in a Secondary School context:

“As a secondary school Parent Council we engage well with the school. One recent change that has been made is that, we decided to make each Parent Council meeting have a theme, presentation or workshop. So far we have covered topics like ‘Bullying and Anti-Social Behaviour’, ‘School Values, Vision & Aims’ and ‘Attainment and Learning from S1 to S6’. This has proved very popular and Parent Council members are very positive and enthusiastic about this change.”



I can certainly see a more sustained and regular attendance of members rather than if we were talking merely about organising the latest raffle or something!

Example of parental representation in action in a Secondary School Department of Additional Support context:

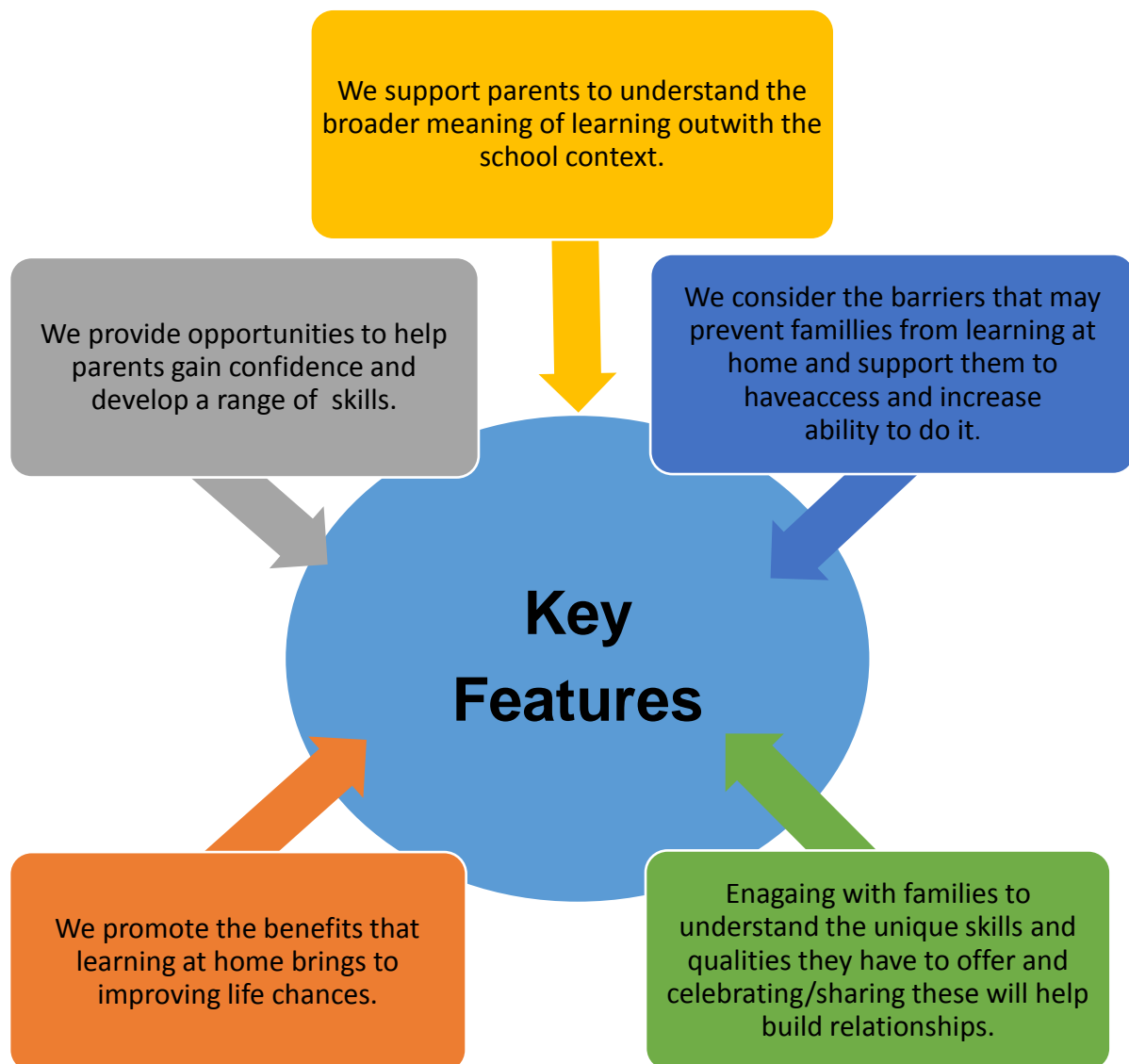
“As a Department of Additional Support, partnership with our parents is crucial and one of our parents has set up a parent support group for those parents who have children with additional support needs. The group meet in the school and work together with the school to improve outcomes for the whole family.”



Working in partnership with our parent group means we reach more families, building relationships that allows honest communication and effective support that best meets the family's needs

Learning at Home

Did you know? Children spend only 15% of their time in school and so parents are the main educators for their child. Many of the skills we rely on as an adult were learned out with the school environment. Schools in Fife embrace and celebrate the learning and achievement from home.



Parents naturally help their children to learn during their earliest years by involving them in simple, every-day events:



As children grow, and education becomes more formal, parents can feel unsure as to what they can do, aside from homework tasks, to help and support their children to achieve their very best. A number of Fife parents have reported through the Parentwise survey that want to know more about how to support their children learning at home. Schools and parents need to work together to develop approaches that suit their school communities best.



In Fife we have the Fife Families website. This encourages parents of younger children to take time ...to explore ... to play ... for a story ...for a cuddle ... to eat well together ... for you. [Fife Families website](#)

As children grow into adolescents the way in which we "Take Time" with them changes and can, at times, be more difficult to manage. Schools, parents and partners working together to share a range of ideas relating to spending time with older children as they grow into young people, is a way that schools, Parent Councils/parent groups and partners can make a real difference. This can help reassure parents that it is understood that adolescence can be a challenging phase of growing up and help and advice is available if people want it.

Example of learning at home in action in a Secondary School context:

In September around 100 parents attended an after school event about numeracy, conceptual understanding and Growth Mindset. Led by our Maths Department. Parents were given some background into Growth Mindset, took part in a cooperative activity groups where they tested their approach to a Growth Mindset puzzle and then we shared some of the approaches that we have been adapting in our school. An S6 pupil shared his own experience of using Growth Mindset in Maths and how it had benefited him. Parents were introduced to what homework related to these topics may look like and were issued with the Growth Mindset language cards. They were asked to reflect on the language that they use with their children and themselves.

Initially, parents felt a bit anxious about a different form of engagement, i.e. being involved in groups and discussion rather than listening to a presentation, they evaluated the session positively and many requested a further input to develop further understanding and support of their children at home.

The next session on Literacy and Growth Mindset was led by our English Department using a similar set up with parents in groups. They first focused on further background into Growth Mindset with a task related to parental language and its influence on learning. A booklet of strategies for improving literacy and engagement was distributed with reading, examples of pupil work at different levels, websites and links that parents could access at home. An S3 shared her experience of literacy and how she was applying Growth Mindset in her learning. We had an evaluation and the Parent Council joined in for part of the activity.

Parents really engaged with the sessions and became actively involved. We can definitely see how positive this approach is for parents, how it breaks down barriers to parental engagement and it improved how our pupils approach new learning!

Parent / Carer Literacy Evening (January 2017)

1) On a scale of 1 to 5, how useful did you find the information on the language of growth mindset?

1 2 3 4 5

2) On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to now encourage a growth mindset at home?

1 2 3 4 5

3) On a scale of 1 to 5, how useful was the information on supporting literacy at home?

1 2 3 4 5

4) Is this information evening an event that you think we should continue to hold in the future?

Parent / Carer Engagement

Research shows that family engagement has a bigger influence on children's attainment than other social, economic and family background factors.

Influence on pupil achievement:

- Home: 60-80%
- School: 20-40%



Example of learning at home in action in a Primary School context:

“Our school has introduced Primary 1 Peep. Our P1 teachers have all been trained in Peep and have offered Peep sessions in P1. These have taken place at the end of the school day in the P1 classes and have focussed on what the children are learning in class and ways that the parents can support this at home. Feedback has been extremely positive with parents commenting that they are learning new ways to support their child’s education at home via games and spending 1-1 time with their child.”

Parents feel more able to support at home and this has improved pupil engagement and pace of learning within the classroom

Challenge questions:

- Having read this strategy, what are you going to do now?
- How will you measure the impact of any changes you are thinking of making?
- Can you think of ways to share ideas, challenges and possible opportunities with your networks?



Supporting School Self-Evaluation

In order to support schools link with this strategy closely with **HGIOELC/HGIOS4** and to see how parental involvement is threaded through all Quality Indicators, We have collated the challenge questions that support schools evaluate parental engagement within their own context, (see Appendix 1).

Education Scotland’s - *Engaging parents and families*: Is a toolkit that provides practitioners with support for self-evaluation and self-improvement through links to research, effective practice case studies, examples of improvement journeys and professional learning materials that can be used by individuals or groups. The toolkit is a comprehensive online resource which will continue to be reviewed and refreshed with new content. This can be located within the [National Improvement Hub](#)

Final thoughts ...

In conclusion, we return to the beginning of this strategy document and repeat the key messages. The knowledge and unique relationships that parents have with their children help to strengthen the partnership between home and school. The impact of this strategy depends upon each individual school's response to the challenges posed. This involves each school identifying aspects of non-engagement within their own school communities, consideration of potential barriers to involvement, and exploration of new and creative ideas and solutions.

Useful Sources of Information

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/>

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/partnerships/engagingparents/engagingparentsandfamiliestoolkit/familylearning.asp>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/par2engagingparentstoolkit.aspx>

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/>

<http://www.sptc.info/>

[Fife Families Website](#)

Appendix 1

QI Challenge Questions are designed to support and guide practitioner's evaluation of Parental Engagement within their own learning environment. QIs are matched to core elements of parental engagement. QI 2.5 Family Learning is matched throughout the core elements

KEY: HGIOS4 – Black, HGIOELC - Grey
HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP – Challenge Questions
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
Quality Indicator 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement
<i>Do all staff have sufficiently high aspirations and expectations for all children and young people?</i>
<i>Do all staff and partners have up-to-date knowledge about the local community and understand circumstances affecting children's lives and learning?</i>
<i>What do we know about the community in which children live and learn; and, in what ways are we using this knowledge to improve outcomes for children?</i>
Quality Indicator 1.2 Leadership of Learning
<i>How effectively do we create a learning culture within our school?</i>
LEARNING PROVISION
Quality Indicator 2.2 Curriculum
<i>In what ways do we share the purpose of our curriculum framework with children, parents, practitioners and partners? What difference does this make to our practice?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.4 Personalised Support
<i>How well do we know our children, and their families? How do we use this knowledge to help children progress in their learning?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.5 Family Learning
<i>To what extent are we sure of what meaningful engagement with families looks like?</i>
<i>Are outcomes for children improving as a result of their participation in family learning? How do we know?</i>
<i>How is family learning improving their capacity to learn?</i>
<i>How are we ensuring that provision is responsive to the needs of families?</i>
<i>How effectively do we use current available data about levels of poverty in our community to help us target interventions?</i>
<i>How well do we match the right programme to the right families?</i>
<i>What do we do to identify and overcome barriers to participation in our family learning programmes?</i>
<i>What do we do to address parents/carers own learning needs in areas such literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing?</i>
<i>What do we do to meaningfully engage with families taking account of their individual circumstances?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.6 Transitions
<i>To what extent do our processes for: involving children and young people; parents, carers and families; and partners and other agencies ensure effective transitions for all learners?</i>
<i>How effectively do our processes for settling in new children support them and their parents/carers to become familiar with their surroundings? To begin to develop close, positive relationships and to continuity in meeting their care and learning needs?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.7 Partnerships
<i>How do we ensure that relationships with parents, carers, families, the local community and partners are characterised by trust and respect?</i>
<i>How well do we support parents/carers understand the value of their engagement in children's learning?</i>
SUCSESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
Quality Indicator 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion
<i>How do we ensure there is an ethos and culture of inclusion, participation and positive relationships across the whole learning community?</i>
Quality Indicator 3.2 Securing Children's Progress (HGIOELC)
<i>How effective are we at sharing children's progress with parents/carers?</i>

PARENTAL REPRESENTATION – Challenge Questions
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
Quality Indicator 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement
<i>How well do we take action to remove barriers to success?</i>
<i>How well do we involve all stakeholders (children, staff, parents and carers, families and partners) in self-evaluation and planning for improvement?</i>
<i>To what extent are all stakeholders (children, practitioners, parents/ carers and partners) involved in self-evaluation and planning for improvement?</i>
Quality Indicator 1.3 Leadership of Change
<i>To what extent does our school community have ownership of our vision, aims and values?</i>
<i>How effective are our processes for involving the whole school community in the ongoing review of our vision, aims and values?</i>
<i>How effectively do we communicate our vision with children, families and partners? How successful are the approaches used to ensure that everyone has a say in shaping our future direction?</i>
LEARNING PROVISION
Quality Indicator 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment
<i>How effectively do we involve learners and parents in planning and evaluating learning?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.4 Personalised Support
<i>To what extent do we involve parents/carers and partner agencies to ensure all children benefit from the right support at the right times?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.5 Family Learning
<i>How can we demonstrate that families are feeling included and that they are participating, achieving and progressing?</i>
<i>How is our family learning helping promote the wellbeing indicators? How do we know?</i>
<i>How effectively do we monitor participation?</i>
<i>How well are families supported in developing strategies which lead to positive relationships, better learning and better behaviour?</i>
<i>How can we demonstrate that families are feeling included and that they are participating, achieving and progressing?</i>
<i>What approaches do we use and to what extent do we involve families in planning opportunities to meet their learning needs?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.6 Transitions
<i>How well do we work with parents/carers and with partners in other agencies to plan transitions for children who require additional support?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.7 Partnerships
<i>How well do we enable parents, carers and families and the local community to contribute to the life of the school and be involved in school improvement?</i>
<i>Is our Parent Council representative of all the parents and carers in the school and their social, economic and cultural backgrounds? If not, what are we doing to address this?</i>
<i>How do we know our support to parents/carers has led to further engagement in children's learning within the setting, at home and in the wider community?</i>

LEARNING AT HOME – Challenge Questions
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
Quality Indicator 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement
<i>How effective are we at ensuring an inward, outward and forward focus in our evaluation and improvement activities?</i>
<i>What evidence do we have that changes we have made are as a result of our self-evaluation and have improved outcomes for children?</i>
Quality Indicator 1.3 Leadership of Change
<i>What range of data and information do we utilise to understand the social, economic and cultural context of the local community?</i>
LEARNING PROVISION
Quality Indicator 2.4 Personalised Support
<i>What do we do to encourage a child's sense of belonging and increase their knowledge within their wider community?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.5 Family Learning
<i>What evidence do we have that family learning is improving the life chances of the families involved?</i>
<i>To what extent do all staff understand GIRFEC, the wellbeing indicators and how these can have a positive impact on children and their families?</i>
<i>How are we actively promoting equality, fairness and diversity</i>
<i>To what extent do all staff understand GIRFEC, the wellbeing indicators and how these can have a positive impact on children and their families?</i>
<i>How do we know if outcomes for children are improving as a result of their participation in family learning?</i>
<i>What evidence do we have that our partnerships with others are strong and support family learning?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.6 Transitions
<i>How well do we work with parents/carers to ensure transitions are personalised, planned in advance and sensitively handled? How do we support parents/carers to adjust to change at key points of transition?</i>
Quality Indicator 2.7 Partnerships
<i>How effectively do we support parents and carers to participate in, contribute to and understand their child's learning? How effectively do we communicate about progress, attainment and achievement?</i>
<i>What do we do to support families to participate in, contribute to and understand the value of their engagement in children's learning and life of the setting?</i>
SUCCESES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
Quality Indicator 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion
<i>Have we successfully established an inclusive learning environment and setting? How welcome and included do all children, parents/carers and partners feel? How do we know?</i>
Quality Indicator 3.2 Securing Children's Progress (HGIOELC)
<i>Do we truly value contributions and children's achievements from beyond the setting? Would parents/carers recognise their role in this?</i>
Quality Indicator 3.3 Creativity and Employability/Developing Creativity and skills for life and learning
<i>How well are learners' creative endeavours at home and in the community acknowledged and celebrated?</i>