

School Handbook Guidance

Information for local authorities and schools
following the Education (School and Placing Information)
(Scotland) Regulations 2012



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ministerial foreword



I am pleased to write this foreword for the new School Handbook. The document marks the completion of this Government's commitment to updating the School Handbook Regulations. We have introduced changes, based on direct consultation with parents, that will ensure that they will get the information they need and that they have told us they want from their child's school. The new requirements reflect the changes in Scottish education and recognise the important role that parents play as partners in their schools.

We know School Handbooks are one of many ways that schools communicate with parents. The School Handbook is a valuable resource for parents to help them choose a school, prepare for school or as a reference tool during school. It can enable effective communication between a school and its community, conveying ethos, values and identity. It can also help parents support their own child and their school's improvement.

When parents are successfully and meaningfully involved in their child's learning, and in the life of their schools, children do better. Good communication, relationships and information are key to successful involvement. The new School Handbook aims to support and strengthen the relationship between schools, local authorities and parents. As Minister for Learning, I am fully committed to further improvement in our education system and to involving parents as part of that improvement.

Parents are vital partners in the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and in helping us improve standards and outcomes for all children. I would encourage schools, Parent Councils and local authorities to continue to work together and to develop a School Handbook that meets the needs of their own parent community, and find ways to further strengthen relationships with parents.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alasdair Allan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Dr Alasdair Allan
Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages

NPFS foreword



We were delighted to work alongside the Scottish Government and the National Parental Involvement Coordinator during the School Handbook consultation in 2010/11. Co-hosting consultation events for parents/carers proved illuminating for all participants, as parents shared their ideas with enthusiasm and broadened out the scope of the School Handbook in exciting and innovative ways. Parents' responses to the consultation also demonstrate that, given the opportunity, many parents are keen to contribute in a myriad of different ways. The new School Handbooks will reflect this diversity, as schools set out their own exciting parental involvement opportunities.

We firmly believe that the School Handbook plays a crucial role in enhancing and communicating strong and successful school communities. By opening the door on the rich tapestry of school life, the School Handbook is the document which most clearly sets out values and aspirations as it welcomes families into school communities. The School Handbook is the key to establishing clear communication routes and laying the ground for effective partnerships with parents which will endure for several years and which will determine the futures of our children.

This guidance reflects the genuine and deeply-felt interest that parents have in being part of their school community, offering their time and energy in support of shared values and common objectives. There is much research which confirms that parents from all cultural backgrounds, regardless of their own educational experiences, are committed to their children's schooling. We need to capture that commitment early on and then sustain it: the School Handbook lays the foundations for this.

Going forward, we very much look forward to School Handbooks which describe the wonderful opportunities for parental involvement that Scottish schools offer and encourage. Please do contact your own local National Parent Forum representative if we can offer any assistance as you develop your new School Handbooks. We know that parents will appreciate the opportunity of being involved in the process too.



Iain Ellis
Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland
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Introduction

This guidance accompanies the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (“the 2012 Regulations”). It is intended for use by local authorities and all their schools to support them in preparing their School Handbooks, which take effect on 8 December 2012. The 2012 Regulations can be accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2012/130/made>. The 2012 Regulations also set out other information that has to be provided by local authorities in addition to the School Handbooks. This includes general information about schools in the area and information relating to placing requests. This guidance, however, only relates to the School Handbook.

School Handbooks can serve a variety of purposes: they communicate the ethos of the school and provide a welcome for parents to the school, help parents to choose a school, prepare their child for school and act as a reference tool while their child is at the school. The School Handbook helps parents understand a child’s learning journey and in doing so, facilitates parental involvement in the school and helps parents support their children.

“Parents” are referred to throughout the 2012 Regulations and this Guidance. The definition of “parent” here is the broadly framed definition set out in the 1980 Act which is as follows:

“parent” includes guardian and any person who is liable to maintain **or** has parental responsibilities (within the meaning of section 1 (3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995) in relation to, **or** has care of a child or young person.

The 2012 Regulations are designed to complement the changes brought about by Curriculum for Excellence and to highlight the importance of information to effective parental involvement in children’s learning. The 2012 Regulations update the types, levels and methods of communicating information that parents and carers require at a school, local and national level. Annex A sets out what is legally required by the Regulations, with this guidance providing additional information on what schools and local authorities may wish to communicate with parents and carers, reflecting Curriculum for Excellence and other important aspects related to their child’s education.

This guidance aims to provide local authorities and schools with a framework to develop a School Handbook that their school community would use. However, schools and local authorities are best placed to develop a School Handbook, in partnership with their own local parents, which reflects their own circumstances and the needs of their school community and provides the information they need to support their child effectively. Annex C provides links that local authorities and schools can use in conjunction with this Guidance when developing a School Handbook.

This guidance is informed by the Scottish Government's public consultation on School Handbooks, held between November 2010 and March 2011. The findings of the public consultation were published on the Scottish Government website in June 2011:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/10134353/0>.

A summary of the findings of the consultation can be found at Annex B.

The School Handbook should be reviewed and revised by 8 December in each calendar year to ensure the information provided is up to date. However, online information can be updated and amended throughout the year as necessary. Other publications will become available throughout the year and the School Handbook can signpost parents to where and when these can be accessed, e.g. Standards and Quality Reports, School Improvement Plans.

Parents as partners

The School Handbook is only one part of parental engagement and as highlighted in the public consultation findings, parents and carers need to be informed about key aspects of their child's learning journey on an ongoing basis so that they can fully support the school and their child's learning. The new School Handbook also fits in with the provisions for parental involvement as defined in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act"):

- promoting **learning at home** – by improving the information parents receive from the school on the curriculum, assessment and reporting, support for pupils and school improvement so that parents can help with their child's learning at home and in the community
- improving the **home/school partnership** – by highlighting opportunities for parents to become involved in the school and access information, support and advice to support their child's learning

- **parental representation** – by providing information about getting involved in the Parent Council or other parent representative body at the school

In line with the 2006 Act, local authorities should consider any factors that may act as barriers to parental involvement, whether this is due to challenging family circumstances, busy working lives or communication difficulties. Some parents may find it hard to be fully involved in their child's learning for a variety of reasons and schools must try their best to break down any barriers and provide a warm welcome to **all** parents to help them support their child at school. Schools should use a range of ways to ensure that all parents and carers have the information they need to support their own child's learning and to help them become involved in the life of the school.

Format

The 2012 Regulations make clear that School Handbooks are to be made available on a website which the local authority uses for the purpose of giving information to the public. This could be the school's own website, GLOW page, blog, etc. However, parents have said it would be helpful to have a link to where all School Handbooks can be found on the local authority site too and you may wish to consider how best you can do this.

As well as being available online, the School Handbook must be available on request to a parent in an alternative form including in a language other than English (if it is reasonable to do so). This also includes providing a hard copy to a parent if online access is an issue. Schools may wish to ask parents annually what is their preferred means of receiving the School Handbook. The local authority should also consider its duties under other legislation including the Equalities Act 2010 in respect of the provision of the School Handbook to parents. In the consultation, parents have highlighted that pupils are key to helping parents understand their learning experiences. Local authorities and schools could consider how pupils could be involved in the development of the School Handbook, to improve accessibility of information for parents and provide insights from a pupil's perspective.

Whilst this guidance sets out what information is required, it is for local authorities and schools to decide how the information is organised and laid out. The format of the School Handbook should be accessible to all parents, avoiding the use of jargon and schools should consider involving Parent Councils in its development. Findings from the consultation highlighted that

some parents would like to see the use of photographs, artwork, a section on Pupil Voice, Frequently Asked Questions, etc. included in the School Handbook.

Contact details

This section was highlighted by parents in the consultation as an essential part of the School Handbook as good communication is necessary for effective parental involvement. It should include contact details (including the school website and email address) for the school and the Parent Council. Contact details for the Headteacher should also be provided, as well as arrangements for a parent to visit the school if offered or seeking a place for their child. The 2012 Regulations also require that the School Handbook should include information on the school roll, denominational status and, if the school admits pupils of one sex only, the sex admitted. The School Handbook should also outline procedures for reporting absence or sickness and how parents can voice a concern about their child and how these concerns will be dealt with. The School Handbook should also include information regarding the school's complaints procedure.

The School Handbook should describe provision available at the school, including the stages of education and if the school provides learning experiences through the medium of Gaelic language. As well as detailing options for how a parent can communicate with the school, it should also illustrate how the school communicates with parents.

Parents highly value face-to-face communication. The consultation provided a range of examples of how this could be done, such as arranging a meeting with a teacher or Headteacher, parent surgeries, involvement in school assemblies or attending a specific event to gain a greater understanding of what the child learns and experiences at school.

Parents are also aware of, and appreciate the range of methods of, communication that schools use, including letters, radio announcements, texts, phone calls, emails and the various forms of social media. It may be helpful to outline in your School Handbook how your school is using technology to improve communication with parents and to strengthen home/school partnership and learning at home. This could include the different methods of communication with parents and carers, including routine communication via the school website, newsletter, emails and urgent communication which may involve sending text messages about emergency school closures.

Parental involvement

This section should include information about the opportunities provided for parents to become involved in their child's learning and the life of the school, covering all three aspects of parental involvement (as defined in the 2006 Act) – supporting learning at home, improving home/school partnerships and parental representation. This should also include how support and advice is provided to a parent to help support their child's learning at key stages. The School Handbook could signpost parents to the local authority's Parental Involvement strategy, which sets out how the authority is fulfilling its duties under the 2006 Act.

The School Handbook provides an opportunity to communicate how the school seeks and takes account of parental views on the education it provides and how it involves parents and pupils in evaluating the school's performance (e.g. through audits, questionnaires, open events). In line with the 2006 Act, schools should foster a positive and open ethos which encourages parents to share their views.

The School Handbook provides the opportunity to set out the school's approach to face-to-face communication and thus manage parents' expectations. Parents involved in the consultation have provided characteristics of what they perceived were "open" and "closed" schools as outlined below. Schools may wish to include information in their School Handbook to illustrate how they promote "open" schools.

"Closed" schools	"Open" schools
Gatekeepers who prevent or hinder access	Direct and easy access to who you want to talk to
Not responsive to approaches	Always responsive – within 24 hours
No tools for continuous engagement	Tools for continuous engagement, e.g. homework diary
No open access times	Promoted times each week for open access to Headteacher and teachers

Source: Engagement Events and Focus Groups to Support the Consultation on School Handbooks and Better Information for Parents: Final Report, Rocket Science UK Ltd, June 2011

Parents may also want to learn more about the role of the Parent Council in representing their views on education matters and how they can contact them. The School Handbook could signpost parents to the Parent Council resources listed in Annex C.

School ethos

The findings from the consultation indicated that school ethos is the most frequently cited factor when parents and carers choose a school for their children and that a purpose of the School Handbook should be to communicate that ethos. The School Handbook should include a statement about the school's culture, ethos and values and aspirations for its pupils, as well as details of partnership working and the school's role within the wider community, including partnerships with denominational bodies at a local and national level.

The way that the school articulates its aims and values is felt to be extremely important, with parents describing it as understanding the “uniqueness” of their school. When developing the School Handbook, you may wish to include the following kinds of information that will help parents understand the ethos of their school:

- the values that the school displays and expects of its young people and staff, e.g. caring, courteous, mannerly
- where appropriate, an emphasis on faith and the partnerships with churches and other denominational bodies
- the links that the school promotes and maintains with partners in the community, e.g. sport, business, cultural links
- the school's emphasis on health and wellbeing and positive behaviour such as restorative, solution oriented and nurturing approaches
- the school's approach to global citizenship education, including participation in programmes such as Eco-Schools, Rights Respecting Schools, Fairtrade, etc.

Quotes from pupils, staff, community members and parents can be a helpful way to describe the school's unique ethos, along with images and examples of measures that the school uses to promote its unique values. The Parent Council also has an important role to play in supporting the school in conveying the ethos and values to parents and prospective parents of the school and this could be reflected in the School Handbook.

Feedback from parents highlights the importance of understanding how children are supported throughout their learning. Supporting learning for all children and young people underpins the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and it is the responsibility of all practitioners and partners to deliver this universal entitlement within their own teaching environments.

Curriculum

The School Handbook is seen by parents as a vital resource to help them understand what type of learning experience a child will have as they progress through the school. By understanding and being aware of the key stages, parents are in a better position to support their own child's learning and to support the school.

Curriculum for Excellence introduced a new approach to planning and delivering learning and teaching in Scottish schools on the basis of a continuous 3-18 curriculum. It is built around nationally agreed aims – **the four capacities** – that all children should become **successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors**. The curriculum covers not just what children will be learning but how this is planned and delivered. At the heart of Curriculum for Excellence is the learner's journey and parents wanted the School Handbook to help them understand what that learner journey would look like. It would be good practice for schools in a local cluster to liaise with each other to consider how best to share curriculum information with parents.

Schools are best placed to describe to parents what those different journeys will look like and local authorities will also have information about how they implement and support Curriculum for Excellence. There is also national information which describes the entitlements for each child and young person, the purpose of a broad general education, the expectation of progression through the curriculum levels and curriculum planning guidance which may be helpful additional information for parents who want to further understand the rationale and background to Curriculum for Excellence. Schools and local authorities must signpost parents to where they can access this local and national information and links are provided at Annex C to help with this.

The timing of when information is made available is crucially important. Schools must update information annually, but it is important that relevant information is also made available and updated as necessary throughout the year, particularly at key points when parents are most interested or able to

focus on what it means for their child. This includes when schools are working with learners and parents on subject choices and options for the senior phase and assisting learners as they leave school.

Not all of this information needs to be included in the School Handbook, but it should be made clear to parents, when the School Handbook is made available each year, where they can access relevant information. This should include local and national information which will give parents more information on Curriculum for Excellence and the entitlements and aims for all learners.

The information that should be provided must include:

what subjects are covered, and when

Parents want to understand what the curriculum will look like, the pattern of the year/phase, what their child will be doing and when. Parents want to know this so they can help support their child's learning and also plan ahead. For example, parents find it helpful to know in advance when particular topics or activities occur throughout the school year, or at a particular stage in the child's journey through the school. Examples could be school trips or outdoor activities, language learning, or other planned learning opportunities at a particular stage in the child's school years. This could be linked to the experiences and outcomes, to illustrate a learners' journey through their broad general education and into senior phase. Information should cover opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, and how learning across subjects is planned and delivered.

approaches to literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing

Under Curriculum for Excellence, all practitioners have a responsibility to develop young people's literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills across all areas of their learning. There are separate experiences and outcomes for these three core areas of Curriculum for Excellence and parents will find it helpful to know how the school intends to support children in developing these skills.

how the Senior Phase (S4-S6) is structured and how subject choices can be made

Curriculum for Excellence allows schools and their partners to build a flexible system that offers personalisation and choice. For secondary schools the range of options could include staying on at school, going to college or university, entering work-based learning or community-based learning, volunteering or a combination of these. Parents should be given information which helps them fully understand this key stage of their child's learning journey and enables them to support their child and school in making decisions about their child's

future. The School Handbook should let parents know how they, alongside their children, will be involved in decisions around their child's senior phase options and where they can get advice and information to help them make those informed choices.

opportunities to develop skills for life, future learning and work

All young people are entitled to be given opportunities to develop the necessary skills for learning, life and work. It will be important for parents to understand how the school is encouraging pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens, which could be illustrated by examples from pupils. Secondary schools should explain how they work with partners, such as Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland, to ensure that opportunities to develop career management and other skills are made available and young people are supported and encouraged to seek these out.

arrangements for providing support to pupils in relation to leaving school

Secondary schools should explain how they assist learners as they make the transition beyond school education. This should include guidance on careers, financial advice and further and higher education opportunities. As part of the approach to Opportunities for All, the school could highlight its partnership working with the local community, Jobcentre Plus and also with Skills Development Scotland, perhaps highlighting the use of Skills Development Scotland's 'My World of Work' and links to the 16+ Learning Choices framework. Local information on what is available post school is clearly very important and the School Handbook should signpost parents to where and how they can access this.

sensitive aspects of learning

The School Handbook must also cover how the school will inform and involve parents in any sensitive aspects of a child's learning, such as relationships, sexual health and parenthood education, drugs awareness, etc. It should set out how religious instruction and observance is covered, as well as explain to parents their right to withdraw their child from any such religious activity.

Assessment and reporting

It is vital that parents know and understand how their child's progress in learning will be planned, assessed and reported on. The School Handbook must detail the schools' arrangements and approaches for assessing and reporting a pupil's progress and planning their future learning. How parents are involved

in the assessment process and what opportunities they will have to discuss their child's progress with teachers and the school is very important. The School Handbook is an opportunity to set out the arrangements for assessment clearly for parents.

Assessment takes place throughout the school year. Parents are key partners in learning and assessment gives them the opportunity to be involved in understanding, reviewing and planning next steps in learning. They need to know how the school will keep them informed and involved in their child's progress and achievements. Reporting a child's progress can take many forms, including written reports, children presenting their learning to parents, parents' evenings and ongoing discussions. Reports provide clear, positive and constructive feedback about children's learning and their progress. The School Handbook provides an opportunity to illustrate local approaches for reporting, in line with national guidance.

Not only do parents want to be kept informed about progress, they also want to know how to find out more about assessment and qualification procedures. The School Handbook provides an opportunity to explain to parents the school's arrangements for profiling and the timing of when profiles are available, notably at the key points of change in the school year, for example when moving from primary to secondary. Profiling also provides another opportunity to involve parents in supporting pupils in the development of the content of profiles, particularly information on achievements outside of the school. You may wish to provide details or direct parents to local authority and national information explaining assessment, achievement and profiling.

Transitions

Transitions can have a big impact on children's learning and wellbeing and it is important that parents are well informed to help them support their children as they move on to different stages of learning. Transitions can include moving to primary school from early years learning, moving from primary to secondary school, moving to the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence and then post-school learning, training or work. Transitions also include any changes in a pupil's learning journey, for example when a pupil changes school or when learning is interrupted.

The School Handbook should set out the arrangements in place to support pupils making transitions, outlining what role parents can play. It may also wish to highlight the role of different partners including the early years and

college sector. Where the transition involves moving on to the next stage of a child's education, e.g. from a primary to a secondary school, the School Handbook must include contact details for the subsequent stage. Local authorities will have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that transitions in school education for all children and young people can be as smooth as possible and any information they provide in this respect can be signposted to parents via the School Handbook.

The 2012 Regulations also deal with advertisement by local authorities regarding placing requests and require the authority, on receipt of a placing request, to send out information specified in Schedule 2 to the 2012 Regulations. These arrangements could also be included in the School Handbook or links provided to where this information is available.

National organisations, such as Parenting Across Scotland and Enquire, will also provide advice to parents on supporting their child's transition. Their contact details, which can be found in Annex C, could also be included in the School Handbook.

The School Handbook should also set out the arrangements in place to support pupils with additional support needs in making successful transitions in line with the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended). The revised supporting children's learning code of practice includes a specific chapter (chapter 6) on the requirements on local authorities and others in relation to transition.

Support for pupils

Parents need to know what arrangements exist if they think their child needs extra support, how they can get the information they need and want to help them support their child's learning and development, how they can best communicate with the school to help staff understand their child's needs and responses and how the school will provide them with key information. Feedback from the consultation suggested that it would be helpful for all parents to have an understanding of the range of support needs of children at the school.

The School Handbook must signpost parents to further information about how a pupil's additional support needs will be identified and addressed, as well as the provision made for pupils having additional support needs and ongoing support arrangements. The School Handbook should also include contact

information about further advice and guidance relating to additional support, details of the ongoing support arrangements for pupils, including how pastoral care and pupil support arrangements are provided, as well as procedures for contacting the key adult who has the overall picture of how a pupil is progressing.

Parents of children with additional support needs highlighted their need for different types of information. For parents of children with communication difficulties or more complex additional support needs, how information will be provided was felt to be vital to allow them to support their child and the school in best meeting their child's needs. Local authorities and schools may wish to consider how more detailed information around practical issues, such as the layout of the school and how the playground is supervised, is communicated to parents, depending on the needs of their child.

Local authorities and schools should also consider how their approach to implementing Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and Child Protection procedures are best communicated to parents.

All children and young people should have frequent and regular opportunities to discuss their learning with an adult who knows them well and can act as a mentor, helping them to set appropriate goals for the next stages in learning. These arrangements should be described in the School Handbook.

In addition to the information specified above in the 2012 Regulations, School Handbooks must include information specified by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) which includes:

- the authority's policy in relation to provision for additional support needs
- the authority's arrangements for identifying children and young people with additional support needs and those who may require a co-ordinated support plan together with the particular additional support needs of those so identified
- the role of parents, children and young people in any of these arrangements
- the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the additional support needs of, and the adequacy of additional support provided for, each child and young people with additional support needs

- arrangements for independent mediation services, including details of the service and how to access it
- procedures for dispute resolution, including details of the service and how to access it
- the officer(s) in the authority from whom parents of children having additional support needs, or young people who have these needs, can obtain further information and advice information about any NHS Board in their area or part of the area from whom parents of children having additional support needs, or young people who have these needs, can obtain further information and advice
- such other recognised agencies or organisations that can provide further support, information and advice to parents and young people that it considers appropriate, including information about support and advocacy which currently include:
 - (a) Children in Scotland: Working for Children and Their Families, trading as “Enquire – the Scottish advice and information service for additional support for learning”, a charitable body registered in Scotland under registration number SC003527;
 - (b) Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, a charitable body registered in Scotland under registration number SC033576; and
 - (c) Scottish Child Law Centre, a charitable body registered in Scotland under registration number SC012741.

School improvement

Parents want to see information about the school's performance and improvement in a form that allows them to recognise the school's progress. The School Handbook must detail the school's main achievements over the last 12 months or signpost to where this information can be obtained, e.g. in the School's Standards and Quality Report. It should also outline how the school has performed over the previous three years, including information from qualifications results, leaver destinations, awards and other significant achievements in improving literacy and numeracy and health and wellbeing. Parents also value information around the school and pupils' wider achievement, such as recognised awards and programmes like Eco-Schools, Active Schools, Duke of Edinburgh, John Muir Trust, Young Scot Awards and Sports Leaders UK.

The consultation highlighted that parents want to be involved helping their child's school improve and the School Handbook must identify future improvement plans for the school's performance over the next three years, such as the School Improvement Plan and the role parents can play in that improvement. Schools might also wish to include information in their School Handbook about their approach to raising educational attainment for all children and reducing inequalities in educational outcomes.

The School Handbook should also outline details of where information regarding the school's performance at local and at national level can be obtained. This could be to a local authority website where information is provided on all schools in the area, and also to Scottish Schools Online and the Scottish Government national statistical publications.

Parents view inspection reports as a key source of information. The School Handbook could provide a link to the Education Scotland Inspection website as well as parent-friendly versions of the School Improvement Plan and Standards and Quality reports, as they help parents understand what needs to be improved and how they can support that improvement.

Local authorities and schools might want to consider, in partnership with the Parent Council, how performance data could be presented more clearly. The School Handbook should not duplicate information that is available elsewhere but provide a parent-friendly summary of this information. There are several sources of general information that could be referenced or signposted, including information provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy.

School policies and practical information

School policies and practical information are vital for parents as they enable them to plan, prepare and support their child throughout the different stages of their learning journey. Parents value a wide range of information about life at the school, but they want the School Handbook to be more than a list of policies. They want the School Handbook to be a practical resource and to aid communication between themselves and their child's school.

The School Handbook must include information about school and local authority policies or provide a link to where they can be accessed. It should provide details on extra-curricular activities and pupil representation, including involvement in a Pupil Council. The School Handbook must also highlight the arrangements for school meals and other food and drink, including eligibility and procedures on how to apply for free school lunches.

Parents see the School Handbook as a reference document. Feedback from the consultation highlighted that parents want to know where they can find information on a range of issues such as health matters, homework, school meals, school uniform, anti-bullying, discipline, transport and financial assistance.

Parents also see the School Handbook as a source of practical guidance about their school. The School Handbook must include information about the organisation of the school day, including times of arrival and dismissal, break times, school term dates and holidays. The consultation findings highlighted that parents would like schools to develop a timetable for communication and calendar of events including key dates, such as holidays, parents' evenings and timetable information about gym days, lunch times, etc. In addition to practical information, parents want guidance from the school, which could include information about the role of parents in times of inclement weather, study leave and end-of-term attendance.

Annex A

Schedule 1

Regulation 2

PART II

(SCHOOL INFORMATION)

1. The information specified in this Part is school information.

Contact Details

2. In relation to a school—

- (a) the name;
- (b) the address;
- (c) the telephone number;
- (d) the website (if any);
- (e) the email address;
- (f) the stages of education provided for;
- (g) the present roll;
- (h) the denominational status (if any);
- (i) whether the school provides teaching by means of the Gaelic language (as spoken in Scotland);
- (j) if the school admits pupils of one sex only, the sex admitted;
- (k) the headteacher's name or details of where this information can be found;
- (l) the email address and website (if any) for the Parent Council (or any other parent organisation);
- (m) the arrangements for when a pupil's parent has a concern about the pupil and an overview of how these concerns will be dealt with;
- (n) the procedure in cases of a pupil's absence or sickness;
- (o) the complaints procedure;
- (p) the arrangements for a parent, offered or seeking a place for the parent's child in the school, to visit the school.

Parental Involvement

3. In relation to a school—

- (a) the opportunities provided for a pupil's parent to become involved in the school;
- (b) details of how the school involves a pupil's parent in the pupil's education including how information, support and advice is given to a parent to help the parent support the pupil's learning and help the pupil at key stages, particularly when choices are being made.

School Ethos

4. In relation to a school—

- (a) a statement of the school's culture, ethos and values, its aspirations for pupils and how it celebrates their achievements;
- (b) details of the school's partnerships with denominational bodies at local and national level (if any);
- (c) details of the school's role in the community and how it works with organisations, bodies and persons who work with the school and how it promotes positive behaviour, good relationships and motivates pupils.

The curriculum

5. How the curriculum is planned and provided at a school, including—
- (a) the different subjects and learning opportunities that are available for pupils and when these are available;
 - (b) the opportunities for pupils to develop skills for learning, life and work, including literacy, numeracy and health and well-being in and out of the classroom;
 - (c) in relation to what pupils learn—
 - (i) the arrangements for how pupils will be given choices in what they learn;
 - (ii) how they will be involved in planning what they learn; and
 - (iii) how their parents will be consulted;
 - (d) where and how a parent can find out more information about the curriculum at school, at local and at national level;
 - (e) the arrangements for providing support to pupils in relation to leaving school, including how career guidance and financial advice is provided;
 - (f) how a pupil's parent will be informed of any sensitive aspects of learning;
 - (g) the provision for religious instruction and observance for pupils and arrangements for a pupil's parent who wishes to exercise the parent's right to withdraw that pupil.

Assessment

6. The school's arrangements and approaches for tracking and assessing pupils' progress and planning their future learning.

Reporting

7. The school's arrangements for ongoing and end of year reporting to a pupil's parent on that pupil's progress in curriculum areas, achievements and their future learning.

Transitions

8. In relation to a school—
- (a) the arrangements that are in place to support pupils making transitions and what role their parents can play;
 - (b) the contact details of the school to which pupils will normally transfer for the subsequent stages of their education (on completion of the stages of education provided for at the school to which the school information relates);
 - (c) in paragraph (a) transitions includes moving to the stage of primary education, moving from the stage of primary education to the stage of secondary education and on leaving school.

Support for Pupils

9. In relation to a school—
- (a) where and how a parent can find more information about how pupils' additional support needs will be identified and addressed;
 - (b) the provisions made for pupils having additional support needs, whether the school is a special school or has a special class or unit, or a developmental nursery for observation;
 - (c) who to contact if a parent of a pupil thinks that pupil needs additional support and where to get more information and advice;

- (d) the ongoing support arrangements for pupils including how pastoral care arrangements and pupil support arrangements are provided;
- (e) the arrangements for contacting the key adult who has the overall picture of how a pupil is progressing, for example a form tutor, support for learning teacher or guidance or support teacher.

School Improvement

10. In relation to a school—

- (a) the main achievements of the school over the last 12 months, or details of where this can be obtained;
- (b) the trends and information which give an overall picture of how the school is performing including achievements at SCQF Levels and other awards, leaver destinations, and any other significant achievements, over the past 3 years;
- (c) how the school has improved standards for pupils in relation to literacy, numeracy and health and well-being;
- (d) the plans for future improvement of the school's performance over the next 3 years, including the school's plans to involve parents in that future improvement;
- (e) details of where information regarding the school's performance at local and at national level can be obtained.

School Policies and Practical Information

11. In relation to a school—

- (a) a list of the available school and authority policies and how they can be accessed, or a link to another source where the policies are listed;
- (b) information on activities, groups, clubs and opportunities for pupils to be involved in the school including sports and outdoor activities;
- (c) the opportunity for pupil representation and involvement in the Pupil Council or any similar body;
- (d) the arrangements for school meals and other food and drink, including eligibility and how parents of pupils apply for free school lunches;
- (e) the organisation of a school day, including times of arrival and dismissal, break times, school term dates and holidays.

Annex B

Key findings summary for the Public Consultation on School Handbooks and Better Information for Parents: Results from the Online Consultation and Engagement Events and Focus Groups.

The purpose of the School Handbook

- To communicate the ethos of the school
- To help some parents choose a school
- A practical resource when preparing for school
- A useful reference tool when at school
- A place to signpost further information
- A way for the school to communicate with parents about the child's experience at school and to facilitate parental involvement in the child's learning and school life
- To facilitate communication between the school and parents

Information wanted in future

- Just over two-thirds of respondents in the online consultation wanted their school to provide them with information about their school only, just under a quarter wanted information about their schools and other schools in the council area, and only 8% wanted information about schools across Scotland
- Parents and carers are largely happy with the information they currently receive from their school but provided suggestions for further improving it
- School information is seen as being about much more than just statistics
- Different parents require a different "cocktail" of information, signposting to other sources of information could meet this need

Choosing a school

- Ethos is the most frequently cited factor when choosing a school
- Some parents want performance information when choosing a school
 - Performance information could be presented more clearly, e.g. using graphics, trends are wanted rather than snapshots, and context is needed to explain statistics
- A wide range of information about policies and practicalities is required
- Parents who were choosing a school wanted local information to be more accessible and in one place

Preparing for school

- Parents require a wealth of information about the practicalities of preparing for school and advice on how best to support their child to minimise anxiety and provide reassurance

During school

- Information on school policies, school contact details and the curriculum came out as the top priorities in the online consultation
- Performance information (linked to the school improvement plan) is needed to help parents understand what needs to improve and how they can support this
- The least priority was given to information on school budgets and school attendance rates
- Parents want information to help them understand their child's learning journey and how they can best support this
- Information about additional support needs has to be clear and should be integrated into the main school information
- Parents of children with additional support needs want more opportunities to communicate with the school about their child's needs, to aid the school's understanding
- Schools should signpost further sources of support for parents of children with additional support needs

When information is wanted

- Information is wanted when it is relevant and in plenty of time for making decisions
- Ongoing, up-to-date, information is wanted, not just a once a year “snap-shot”

Accessing school information

- Information needs to be available in a wide range of formats considering all equality issues to meet the needs of all parents
- Online is the favoured format for half of respondents to the online consultation, online seen as:
 - easier to update
 - cheaper
 - more environmentally friendly
- There is an acknowledgement that hard copies are still required
- Face-to-face communication is highly valued

The role of parents/Parent Councils

- Seen as important for parents and Parent Councils to be given opportunities to be involved in producing school information
- Parents want to be given a choice about how to get involved – there was most interest in reviewing and commenting on draft information
- Benefits of involving parents/Parent Councils were seen to include:
 - Ensuring information is relevant to parents
 - Ensuring information is “parent-friendly”
- Suggestions that pupils could be involved too – to improve accessibility of information for parents and provide insights from a pupil’s point of view

The role of the Scottish Government/Local Authorities

- Seen to be a role for Scottish Government/Local Authorities in providing guidance on core information – especially statistical information
- A national approach to school information would allow for consistency when comparing schools
- However, flexibility for schools to add their own information was also seen as very important, and guidelines shouldn't be too restrictive

The overall report of the consultation on *School Handbooks and Better Information for Parents* can be accessed via:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/10134951/0>

ANNEX C

This annex provides links that schools and local authorities may find helpful when developing a School Handbook. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and authors may wish to consider additional sources of school, local and national information, material and resources.

Contact details

The Scottish Government guide Principles of Inclusive Communications provides information on communications and a self-assessment tool for public authorities –

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/14082209/0>

Choosing a School: A Guide for Parents – information on choosing a school and the placing request system –

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/11/10093528/0>

A guide for parents about school attendance explains parental responsibilities with regard to children's attendance at school –

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/12/04134640/0>

Parental involvement

Guidance on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 provides guidance on the act for education authorities, Parent Councils and others –

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/08094112/0>

Parentzone provide information and resource for parents and Parent Councils – <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/index.asp>

School ethos

Supporting Learners – guidance on the identification, planning and provision of support – <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/>

Journey to Excellence – provides guidance and advice about culture and ethos – <http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/cultureandethos/index.asp>

Health and wellbeing guidance on healthy living for local authorities and schools – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/HLivi>

Building Curriculum for Excellence Through Positive Behaviour and Relationships outlines the Scottish Government's priority actions around positive behaviour in schools and is also a source of support – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/06/25112828/0>

Scottish Catholic Education Service's resource 'This is Our Faith' which supports the teaching and learning of Catholic religious education - <http://www.sces.uk.com/this-is-our-faith.html>

Curriculum

Information about how the curriculum is structured and curriculum planning - <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/>

Information about the outcomes a learner can expect to experience and achieve across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, as well as the eight curricular areas -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/howisthecurriculumorganised/experiencesandoutcomes/index.asp>

Advice, practice and resources to support the experiences and outcomes on literary, numeracy and health and wellbeing -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/learningacrossthecurriculum/responsibilityofall/index.asp>

Broad General Education in the Secondary School - A Guide for Parents and Carers - http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/b/genericresource_tcm4725663.asp?strReferringChannel=parentzone&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-634353-64

Information on the Senior Phase - <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatcanlearnersexpect/seniorphase.asp>

Information on Skills for learning, life and work -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatcanlearnersexpect/skillsforlearning.asp>

Information around the Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' programme -

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/services-for-individuals/opportunities-for-all.aspx>

Information for organisations responsible for the planning, management and delivery of career information, advice and guidance services -

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-story/key-publications/career-management-skills-framework.aspx>

The Skills Development Scotland website 'My World of Work' offers a number of tools to support career planning -

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/>

Assessment and reporting

Building the Curriculum 5: a framework for assessment provides guidance around the assessment framework - http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/BtC5Framework_tcm4-653230.pdf

Information about Curriculum for Excellence levels and how progress is assessed -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/howisprogressassessed/stages/index.asp>

Curriculum for Excellence factfile - Assessment and qualifications -

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/publications/c/publication_tcm4624968.asp

Information on recognising achievement, reporting and profiling -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/assessment/achievement/index.asp>

Transitions

Curriculum for Excellence factfile - 3-18 Transitions - provides information on the transitions children and young people will face throughout their education and beyond - http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/publications/c/publication_tcm4660285.asp

Career Information, Advice and Guidance in Scotland - A Framework for Service Redesign and Improvement provides guidance on career information, advice and guidance strategy -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/11110615/0>

Choices and changes provides information about choices made at various stages of learning - <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/choicesandchanges/index.asp>

The Additional support for learning page provides links to relevant legislation and guidance, including the arrangements that should be in place to support pupils with additional support needs -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL>

Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice includes specific requirements on education authorities and others under the new legislation in relation to transition - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/04/04090720/21>

Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning - <http://www.enquire.org.uk/>

Parenting Across Scotland offers support to children and families in Scotland - <http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/>

Support for pupils

The Additional support for learning page provides links to relevant legislation and guidance, including the arrangements that should be in place to support pupils with additional support needs -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL>

Information about the universal entitlement to support that underpins Curriculum for Excellence -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/whatissupport/universalsupport/roleofkeyadult.asp>

Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice (Revised edition) - provides Statutory guidance relating to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/04/04090720/21>

Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person, is essential reading for anyone involved or working with children and young people, including practitioners working in adult services with parents and carers -

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

School improvement

Scottish Schools Online – provides a range of school information, including contact details, school roll, facilities, website, inspection reports –
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scottishschoolsonline/>

Education Scotland’s Inspection and review page provides information on the inspection process –
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/index.asp>

The Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) is an annual sample survey which will monitor national performance in literacy and numeracy –
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/SSLN>

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) – <http://www.scqf.org.uk/>

Scottish Qualifications Authority provides information for teachers, parents, employers and young people on qualifications – <http://www.sqa.org.uk/>

Amazing Things – information about youth awards in Scotland –
<http://www.awardsnetwork.org/index.php>

Information on how to access statistics relating to School Education –
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education>

School policies and practical information

Schools and local authorities should consider the most relevant school, local and national policies and include details or links for parents to sources of further information.

National policies, information and guidance can be accessed through the following sites:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People>

Children (Scotland) Act 1995 –

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/36/contents>

Standards in Scotland’s Schools (Scotland) Act 2000 –

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2000/6/contents>



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