

recognised as very important: the PC has a role to play in working out how this can happen.

- Representing parents' views to the education authority and others on those issues that are of concern to parents, staff and pupils.
- Taking on those social and fundraising activities previously run by the PTA.

It may sound a bit daunting, but the Parent Council doesn't have to do everything all the time; you can focus on one or two activities at any one time. However, it is important for the Council to know that it can be involved in this wide range of activities.

Do we have to get our accounts audited?

No. Accounts must be reviewed and presented at the AGM, however this does not need to be done by a professional auditor. (This is different if your Parent Council is a charity.) Try to find someone who is used to this sort of work, e.g. someone who works in a bank or building society. This person should not be a member of the Parent Council or a relative.

Why do we have a Parent Support Group alongside our Parent Council?

PTAs were not affected by the legislation and can continue acting completely separately from the Parent Council. However, the Parent Forum is exactly the same as the full PTA membership (i.e.

all the parents in the school), so they may decide to have just one parent committee – the Parent Council – and for it to take over the activities of the PTA. In this case the PTA should hold an EGM to disband and the Parent Council should set up a fundraising/social subcommittee, which can still be called a PTA and looks and acts very much like a PTA. However, it would have to submit reports on its activities and finances to the Parent Council and abide by any general policies (e.g. on sponsorship) decided by the Parent Council.

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What is a Parent Council?

What is the Parent Forum?

This is the body that was defined in the 2006 Act on parental involvement, and it consists of all the parents who have a child at the school. They are automatically members, whether they like it or not! The Parent Forum can expect to:

- receive information about the school
- decide on the format of the Parent Council and how it operates
- identify issues for the Parent Council
- be consulted by the Parent Council
- express views through the Parent Council

What is the Parent Council?

The Parent Council is the committee appointed by the Parent Forum to run matters on its behalf. However, some small schools may decide that the whole Parent Forum will act as the Parent Council and take on those duties – such as appointing the Headteacher – which are part of the Parent Council's remit.

Are there any rules about who we should have on our Parent Council?

Although the *number* of members is not specified in the legislation, there are certain things that are fixed:

- The majority of Parent Council members must be parents of children at the school
- The definition of “parent” is very wide and includes everyone with a parenting role with regards to a pupil.
- Teachers, who are also parents at the school, can be on the Parent Council as parent members
- The Chairperson must be a parent with children at the school
- The Headteacher (or his/her representative) has a right to attend all meetings
- In denominational schools, the local church can nominate a representative

May we include other people on our Parent Council?

Yes you can but remember that this must be decided by the Parent Forum. Most parents would probably want representation from the school staff, both teachers and support staff. This is already an established tradition with PTAs, but don't forget to ask the staff if they are willing to be represented before you write this into constitution!

Your Parent Council may also find it useful to co-opt/ask other people to come along on a “needs” basis. For example, if you are going to discuss road safety then you may want to meet with the community police officer. Other people you might wish to invite to your Parent Council are local councillors, community councillors and other community figures.

Although it might not always be appropriate (or very interesting) for the pupils to send a permanent representative to your meetings, it is a good idea to keep up links with the pupils, e.g. by exchanging minutes with or asking for ideas from the Pupil Council.

Can a parent be on more than one Parent Council?

Yes, provided they have a child at each school.

What is the role of the Headteacher on the Parent Council?

The Headteacher has a right and a duty to attend meetings of the Parent Council or s/he can send a representative. Of course, it might not always be necessary for the Head to be at a meeting, for example if you are discussing arrangements for an event.

The Parent Forum can ask the Headteacher to give advice and information to the Parent Council on any school matter for which they are responsible.

The Headteacher should give an annual report to the Parent Council on the school's performance and its ambitions and objectives.

Do we have to be called a Parent Council?

No, you can call your group anything you want. However, you will be recognised by the local authority as a Parent Council.

What do Parent Councils do?

The main aim of the Parent Council is to help the school operate as a successful school. Also:

- There is an important role in improving links between all parents and the school.
- Making sure that parents get all the information they need and that the school staff gets feedback on parents' views.
- Discussing any issue that's of interest to parents, including school policies on such things as bullying, school uniform, drugs and sex education. Individual issues should not be dealt with by the Parent Council.
- Working jointly with the school to set up extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs.
- Under Curriculum for Excellence, parental involvement in their children's learning is