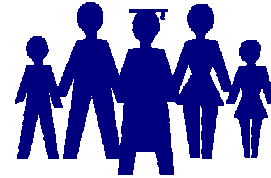


Backchat



SPTC Newsletter

Scottish Parent Teacher Council, the independent voice for parents, is the national organisation for Parents' Associations and Parent Teacher Associations. *Backchat* is sent to all members.

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Issue 93

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It's all go for Parent Councils!

By now you should have received a copy of both the toolkit and the regulations on Parent Forums and Parent Councils. The rather shorter summary leaflet, *A new law to support parents* is available on the Parentzone website www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

STOP PRESS: Insurance and Parent Councils

As you know, our membership and insurance year runs for the calendar year i.e. from January to December. However, the new Parent Councils will come into being in August 2007 and some of you may be thinking of joining forces with your school board to form a Parent Council in your school. The new Parent Councils will still need public liability insurance and the good news is that you will be able to transfer your PTA membership and insurance to the new Parent Council should you decide to make the change in August. All that you will have to do is let us know that you are winding up the PTA/PA and forming a Parent Council. We will do the rest.

This year **SPTC's Annual Conference** will be about Parent Councils. The **theme** is "**How to Build a Parent Council**" and there will be workshops looking at section 8 of the toolkit, *Developing a Parent Council*. Delegates will have the chance to discuss the various options for a Constitution. The date is **18th November**; the venue is the **Holyrood Campus of Edinburgh University** (Moray House). **Registration starts at 10.00 am**. The cost, which includes morning coffee and lunch, is £7.50 per head or £5 per head if more than one person comes from the same PTA/PA. Places are going quickly, so if you haven't signed up already and want to come, please get in touch.

At each school, the constitution for the new Parent Council will have to be approved by all the parents and this process will be easier if the PTA and school board have jointly discussed possible options. A good starting point would be to list all the activities that the board and PTA currently do and then consider whether you want these to continue or be changed in some way. You can then consider whether this range of activities is best done by two, totally separate groups (as at present) or whether they should be brought together under a single committee, perhaps supported by sub-committees.

Once you have decided on activities and number of committees, the next thing to think about is how parents could/should be involved. You don't have to be restricted to the formats of the present board and PTA. For example you might think of drawing representatives from each year group and even of

setting up year-group sub-committees to organise activities for each year group. Indeed, the Parent Council could be a federation of these year-group committees - that would certainly make communication a lot easier. What is important is that you design a Parent Council that suits your school and desired activities.

New Seat Belt Regulations

As you are doubtless aware, new seat belt regulations came into force on 18th September this year. The headline news has been about the requirement for youngsters between the ages of 3 and 12 to use booster seats. We thought it would be helpful to give a little more detail to some of the regulations all of which can be found in full on www.rospa.com the website of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

The following regulations apply to children travelling in cars, vans and goods vehicles; the driver is responsible for ensuring that they are complied with.

1. Children under 3 years of age

The restraint appropriate for their weight **MUST** be used, for children under 3 years, in all cars, vans and other goods vehicles. (The only exception is the rear of taxis.) **Such children cannot travel otherwise.**

2. Children under 12/ 135 cms in height

The regulations state that the correct seat restraint **MUST** be used in the front seat (otherwise the child cannot sit there) and **MUST** be used in the back seat if seat belts are fitted. (If there are no seat belts, the child can travel in the back seat.)

There are three exemptions where such a child does not have to use a child restraint, but **MUST** use the adult belt instead. These are

- a) in a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle
- b) if the child is travelling a short distance for reason of unexpected necessity e.g. trip to an A & E department of a hospital
- c) if there are two occupied child restraints in the rear which prevent a third being fitted.

These regulations no longer apply once a child is more than 135 cms in height, whatever their age, or once they are 12 years old whatever their height.

3. Children over 135 cms or 12 years

MUST use adult seat belts, if these are available.

4. New Regulations in buses and coaches

(including minibuses) require everyone aged 14 and above to use a seat belt where they are fitted. Bus and coach operators need to notify their passengers of this. Regulations covering children under 14 are not yet in place but will be introduced as soon as possible but there will be **no requirement** on anyone to provide child restraints in buses etc.

Children's working hours

Although there has been plenty of (albeit confusing) publicity about the seat belt regulations, you may not have noticed the **changes to children's working hours** which were introduced in April in The Children (Protection at Work) (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

1. **Weekly Limit:** As from April 18th children below the minimum school leaving age (calculated according to when a child turns 16), may only work up to **12 hours a week** during term time.
2. **Daily Limit: On Sunday to Friday inclusive**, there is a daily limit during school term time of **2 hours per day**,
3. **On Saturdays**, youngsters under 15 can work 5 hours and those over 15 can work for 8 hours. However, the Saturday hours still contribute to the overall 12 hour weekly limit.

If you would like more information go to the Scottish Executive's website: www.scotland.gov.uk

Advice on Bullying

We are somewhat sad to report that the Anti-Bullying Network, which has given so much good advice to parents and schools, has been wound up. Good friends like Andrew Mellor and Kate Betney have had to move on to other things. The Executive, in its wisdom, wanted the focus on bullying to move beyond schools to the wider community and, after a tendering system, they have given the task (and funding) to Better Futures, a project developed in a joint bid from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Scotland and the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

As part of its community remit, the new service will target mobile phone and Internet bullying. Meantime Childline Scotland's dedicated Bullying Helpline continues. The number is 0899 441111.

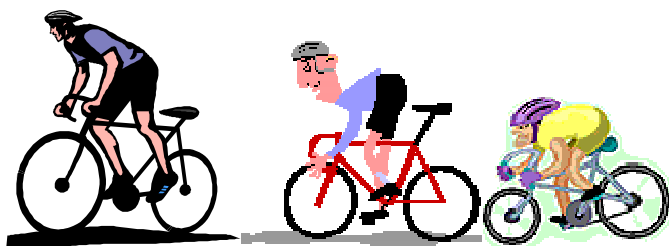
Food and Glorious Enterprise

Trawling the papers recently, we have come across some more stories for our series showing how the official determination to get youngsters to eat healthily is bringing out the very best of enterprise in them.

Doubtless many of you will have read of the Rotherham Mums who, appalled at the seemingly unappetising "healthy" lunches their children were being offered, took orders for fish and chips at break time and then returned at lunchtime with the freshly cooked "alternative" lunches – a carry-out service with a difference.

Our own favourite story concerns a youngster who suddenly showed an uncharacteristic interest in riding his bike to school. As this was somewhat out of character – he had never before shown any spontaneous wish to be physically active – his mother challenged him on his new-found enthusiasm for cycling. Suddenly all was revealed. The local chip shop was too far away from the school for pupils to walk there and back in the lunch break. However, the round trip was very achievable by bike hence the new enthusiasm for cycling and, as the lad himself explained, it was a healthy option! Lets hope he wears a helmet.

It is no surprise that, in a study for the Scottish Executive, 55% of children did not want to see a complete ban on favourites like pizza and chips, although they do want healthy food, particularly more fruit.



S4 makes its usual lunchtime dash to the chip shop!

However, one school, Springburn Academy, does seem to have cracked the problem of getting youngsters actually to eat healthily by using that good old parenting technique of offering a reward (otherwise known as a bribe). Students who take the healthy option earn points which they can later cash in for prizes. One very healthy youngster gained 3000 points in this way which he has since cashed in for an iPod shuffle and cinema tickets. He is now targeting a PSP games system, but he'll need 6,000 points for that. He has a lot of healthy eating ahead of him!

All this is just as well as weighing is the new assessment regime! East Renfrewshire already tops the league in its exam results and it is now aiming to ensure that all these healthy minds are indeed in healthy bodies. It has announced its intention to introduce a weighing regime – youngsters will be weighed and measured in P1, 4 and 7 and then again in S3. Where

children are deemed to be overweight or underweight, they will be given advice on diet and exercise. Something else to dig out of the bottom of the school bag from amongst the debris of the packed lunch!

Your Questions Answered

Our PTA runs a range of clubs and activities for the children. How should we manage all these different groups? Someone suggested they could be set up as sub-committees, but I'm not sure how that would work.

If your PTA does run clubs and groups, it is very important that the PTA knows what is being done in its name because, if anything goes wrong with a "PTA activity", it will be the PTA committee that has to deal with the problem. Moreover, if you want your public liability insurance to cover all your PTA activities, it is essential that there is a clear paper trail linking the activities to the PTA committee and demonstrating that the PTA committee is in overall charge.

I suggest that you start by listing all the activities, so that you know exactly how many clubs and groups you are responsible for. If there is currently no record of these in PTA minutes, it would be sensible to report the list to the next committee meeting so that it can be recorded in the minutes.

Next, look at how each activity is currently run and how it is tied into the PTA committee. Clubs and groups are often set up informally by an enthusiast with a particular skill – for example a mum who is good at Salsa dancing sets up an after-school club for the children. You could also have a semi-independent committee that is running a sports club on behalf of the PTA. In either case it is important that the format for running the activity is recorded and that those who are responsible for managing the activity understand that they are doing so on behalf of the PTA. You should require them to provide a brief report for inclusion in the PTA's Annual Report to Parents. Such reports should include a brief statement of what the club/group has done plus a statement of all income and expenditure. If pupils have to pay to do the activities, then there has to be a clear understanding of how the charge was decided and what the money covers. The clubs and groups have to comply with any general policy the PTA may have for example on sponsorship, equal opportunities etc.

The PTA committee should draw up a brief remit for each activity, so that anyone who runs the activity has a clear understanding of what can/cannot be done and anyone who takes part knows what to expect.

This may all seem like a lot of work, but good organisation and management will help avoid problems in the future and will certainly ensure the activities have insurance cover!

SPTC NEWS

Contact details

It's that time of year again when we are heading first for our AGM and then sending out renewal notices for membership, including insurance. It is therefore very important that we have the right contact details. The name and address on the envelope is the contact information that we have. If this is wrong, please can you let us have the right information by email, post or telephone.