

# **Guide for Leeds Primary Schools**

## ***Setting up a Parent Council in your School***



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## What is a parent council?

A parent council is a platform for parents / carers of children who attend the school to put forward their views and opinions to the school and governing body.

The parent council is a forum to enable parents / carers to be consulted, learn more about the school and how they can be involved.

The parent council provides a platform for parents / carers to have a voice and influence within the school environment.

Being part of the parent council is less formal than being on the Governing Body, but enables parents / carers to make a real contribution to the school without having any statutory responsibilities.

## Benefits for the school

A parent council can demonstrate to Ofsted that there are mechanisms in place to listen and respond to the voices of parent and carers within the school. Parent Council representatives could also meet with inspectors.

Parents/ carers can bring a new fresh perspective and creative solutions to challenges schools are facing.

Parents/carers who are involved in the school are more likely to be involved in their child's education.

A parent council builds good relationships between the school staff and parents and in turn the community.

## Benefits for the parents / carers

Parent council's give parents / carers the opportunity to make a real difference within the school and feel their opinions are being heard and valued.

The parent council will give parents / carers the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and experience.

Parent council members will gain a better understanding of the school and build stronger relationships with senior leadership.

Parent council members may benefit from taking part in training to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The parent council will enable parents/ carers to actively feed into school improvement.

## Role of a parent council?

The role of the parent council is to work in partnership with school staff and the governing body to ensure the parents / carers views and opinions are fed into key decisions about the school.

Possible tasks the parent council will be involved in are:

- consulting with parents / carers on their views around key decisions and policies
- learning about what is being taught in school and how parents / carers can support their child's learning (the parent council's role is to disseminate this to parents)
- feeding back issues / concerns from parents / carers
- produce an annual parents questionnaire and feedback responses to school & governing body
- sit on interview panels for the school when recruitment is taking place

## Issues parents / carers might like a say on

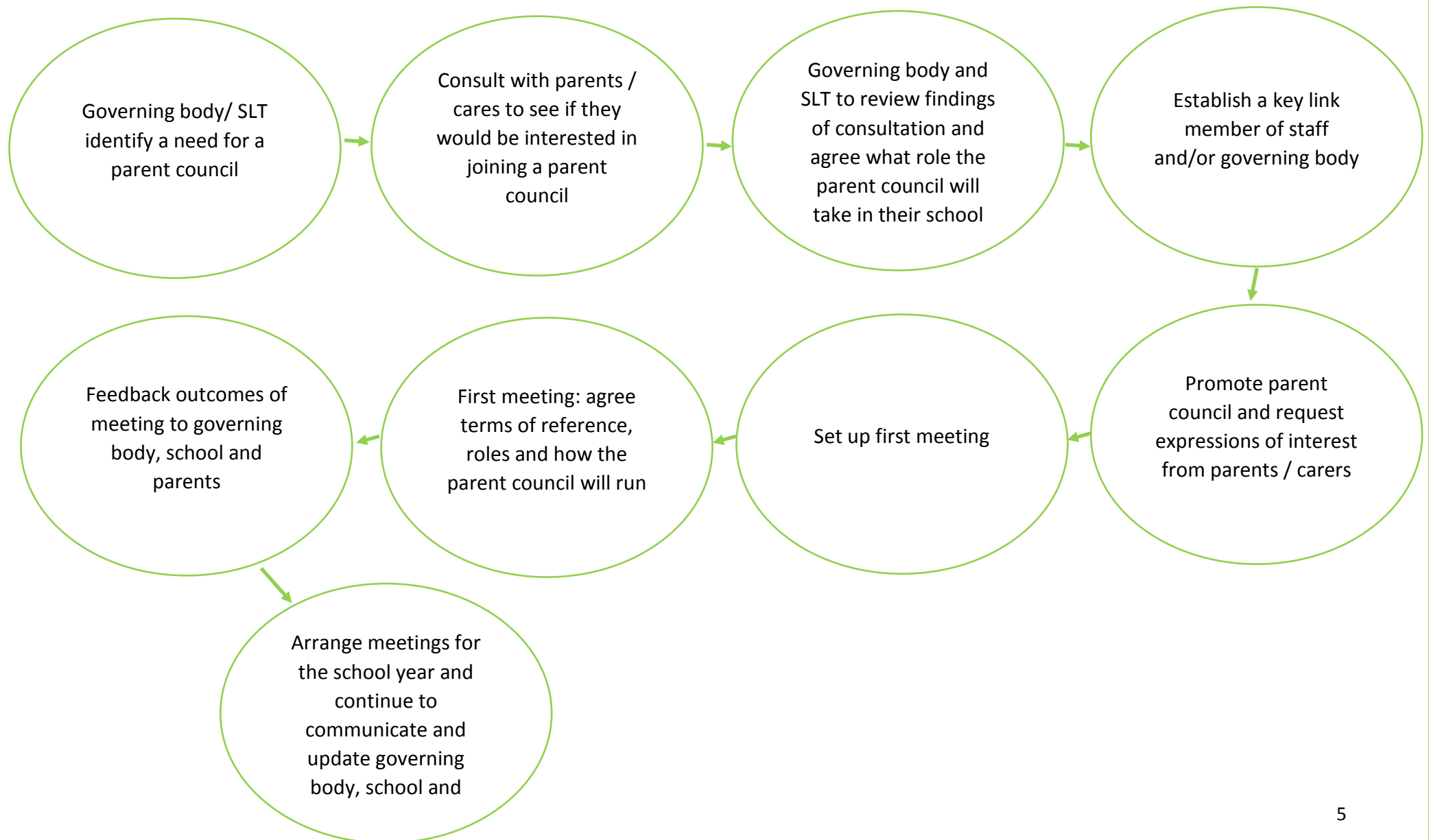
It is proven that children do better when their parents / carers are involved in their learning and ensuring parents / carers feel part of the school community can ensure their commitment to supporting their children.

A parent council can gather the views of the wider parents / carers at the school and feed these into any key decisions made by the governors and school.

There are lots of areas / Issues parents and carers might like to have a say on in the school, examples of these include:

- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| - Homework        | - Wraparound child care |
| - School trips    | - School dinners        |
| - School policies | - Lessons and learning  |

## Setting up a parent council flowchart



## Consulting with parents and carers

Once the Governing Body and SLT have established the need for a parent council it is vital that parents and carers at the school are consulted to find out if there is a need / interest at the school for a parent council.

Consultations can take place in a variety of formats:

- Questionnaires in school book bags
- Text messages / emails to all parents / carers
- Interactive consultation at parent evenings and school events

## Promoting the parent council

Once the governing body have agreed for the parent council to be set up it is now time to promote it to all parents and carers in the school and ask for expressions of interest.

The best way to promote the parent council is to send out the details about the parent council and an expressions of interest form via book bags or promote on the school website.

## Membership

The membership of the parent council should be agreed by the governing body during the early stages of setting up the parent council.

For a parent council to be effective we advise you that you aim to have two parent / carer representatives from each year group.

## Terms of Reference

The terms of reference should be written in partnership by the governing body, school and parent council and agreed at the first meeting.

Terms of reference should include:

- What is a parent council
- Aims and role of the parent council
- Ground rules
- Frequency of meetings
- Membership

## Meetings

Parents / carers are very busy juggling their home lives so you need to ensure the meetings are accessible and at times that parent council members are able to attend.

We advise the parent council to meet at least once a term (autumn, spring and summer) for 60-90 minutes. The time and date of the meetings needs to be agreed with the members of the parent council. Additional ad hoc meetings may be planned if needed and some parent councils may want to meet more regularly -every half term.

To ensure the meetings are accessible, offer to provide activities or support staff if parents/ carers are bringing younger children.

Always ensure refreshments are available (tea, coffee, water etc.)

## Recognition

Parents / carers are giving their time voluntarily to be part of a parent council, so it is important the school considers how they will ensure they continually recognise the contribution of parents / carers who regularly attend the meetings.

Ways to do this could include:

- Providing cakes at a meeting as a thank you
- Head teacher attends a meeting to thank parent council
- Thank you messages in school newsletters / website
- Annual invite to an assembly to say thank you (on behalf of the children and school)
- School provides a notice board for parent council, to raise awareness of representatives, latest minutes and achievements of the parent council.

## Communication

It is vital that the parent council have a channel of communication with the governing body, school and other parents / carers.

It is good practice for the parent council to share the notes from their meeting with the governing body / school following each meeting. We advise that a member of school staff writes the notes from the meeting instead of expecting parent council members do to so.

The parent council should also share what they are doing with other parents / carers. This can be done in a number of ways, such as having a page on the school website or by including updates on the school council newsletter or developing a parent council newsletter or having a notice board in school or the playground that they keep updated.

## First Meeting

The first meeting of the parent council is a great opportunity to agree how the parent council will work within your school. The first meeting will be chaired by the link governor / school contact.

Key items to discuss at the first meeting of the parent council:

- Welcome & Check In: Asking everyone to say to introduce themselves and answer a simple question i.e. what would you like to get from the parent council, favourite thing about the school etc. gives everyone in the room the opportunity to speak before the meeting begins
- Why are we here: ask parents what they would like to get from the parent council and explain what the role of the parent council is within the school
- Terms of reference: all to agree terms of reference and a review date
- Issues parents / carers face within school: start to speak about issues that parents / carers experience within the school. Agree how to gather parent feedback i.e. a parent / carer survey or the parent council to speak to other parents within the school
- Agree date of next meeting: at the end of the meeting agree a date and time for the next meeting that is suitable for all members of the parent council

## Templates

All templates are available to download from the parent and carer participation page on the Family Information Service website <https://tinyurl.com/LeedsPCFvoice>

### Parent Council Flyer


SCHOOL  
LOGO

### [insert school name] Parent Council

Would you like to join the [insert school name] Parent's Council?

Would you like to know more about what pupils are being taught at [insert school name] and how parents and carers can support their learning?

We are looking for parent / carer representatives from each class to represent the views of parents / carers in key decision decisions about the school



Meetings will take place once a term, [insert time] and childcare is provided during the meetings.

If you would like to join the parent council please return the tear off slip to the school office.

**What is a parent council?**  
A parent council is a platform for parents / carers of children who attend the school to put forward their views and opinions to the school and governing body.

The parent council enables parents / carers to be consulted, learn more about the school and how they can be involved and ensures that parents / carers have a voice and influence within the school.

Your Name:	
Child's Year Group:	
Contact Number:	
Contact Email:	

### Meeting Agenda

SCHOOL  
LOGO

### [insert school name] Parent Council

[insert date of meeting]  
[insert time of meeting]  
[Insert venue of meeting]

X minutes	Introduction and Check In
X minutes	Item 1: XXX - Brief explanation of what will be discussed
X minutes	Item 2: XXX - Brief explanation of what will be discussed
X minutes	Item 3: XXX - Brief explanation of what will be discussed
X minutes	Date and Time of Next Meeting - To be agreed at the meeting

### Meeting Notes

SCHOOL  
LOGO

### [insert school name] Parent Council

[insert date of meeting]  
[insert time of meeting]  
[insert venue of meeting]

<b>Attendances:</b> - Insert Name - Insert Name	<b>Apologies:</b> - Insert Name
<b>ITEM 1: XXX</b> Brief description of what was discussed	
<b>ITEM 2: XXX</b> Brief description of what was discussed	
<b>ITEM 3: XXX</b> Brief description of what was discussed	
<b>Date and time of next meeting:</b> Insert date and time of next meeting	

## Good Practice Examples in Leeds

A full list of parental voice and influence good practice in Leeds can be found on the parent voice and influence page on the Family Information Service at <https://tinyurl.com/LeedsPCFvoice>

### Shakespeare Primary School

How long the parent council has been running:	Over three years
How the parent council feed into the school / governing body:	Parent governors attend the parent voice group meetings and share discussions
About the parent council	<p>The parent voice group meeting are run by the assistant head teacher and take place meet every half term, on the third Wednesday 8.45am till 10am. The meetings are a platform for capturing the voice of a wider range of parents on key issues.</p> <p>The meetings are open to all parents / carers from the school. Two topics are discussed at each meeting and these are sent out via text message to all parents. At the beginning of every meeting we start with a 'you said we did' section, this shows parents how the ideas they have suggested have been put into action.</p> <p>We provide cake and biscuits at each meeting as an incentive (except during Ramadan).</p>
Top Tips	Smiley, welcoming, genuine, send a reminder text, get teachers involved, give it status with the pupils so they will use their pester power to get their grown-ups in, respond and validate as many ideas as possible but do what you say you will do- no false promises.

### Bankside Primary School

How long the parent council has been running:	Four years
How the parent council feed into the school / governing body:	All issues raised and discussed are included in the minutes which are circulated to all school staff and governors.
About the parent council	<p>Parents and carers on the group set the topics for discussion and the themes for training.</p> <p>Parents and carers not only raise issues but they are encouraged to actively get involved in tackling the issues.</p> <p>Local Councillors are invited to meetings to hear the issues that the parents feel need tackling in the community.</p> <p>Meetings are chaired by the Assistant Head Teacher.</p>
Top Tips	<p>Use a range of communication approaches.</p> <p>Sending out a text message to parents the day before the meeting to remind them.</p> <p>Encourage parents to set up a WhatsApp group.</p>

## Resources

There are lots of resources available online to help schools to set up successful parent councils within their setting.

Parent Kind

[www.parentkind.org.uk](http://www.parentkind.org.uk)

Enquire

<http://enquire.org.uk/asl/families-schools-partners-role-parent-council/>

Connect

<https://connect.scot/resources>

**For further information, support, advice and guidance on setting up a parent council in a Leeds Primary School please contact the Voice, Influence and Change Team at [vic@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:vic@leeds.gov.uk)**