Dear Sir

**Education Attainment Gap: Submission of Evidence**

Section 3 - how parents (including guardians) and schools can best work together to raise all pupils’ attainment, particularly those whose attainment is lowest.

Please find below response from Renfrewshire Council in relation to

1. **Whether schools always explain clearly to parents how children learn through their school years and how parents could help their development (e.g. with reading and wider literacy approaches)**

Establishments work hard to develop positive relationships with parents to ensure mutual respect and trust and a shared goal of raising the attainment of all learners. Through building good relationships there are open and clear lines of communication with regards to learning. Information sessions are organised to provide guidance to parents on how to support their children’s learning, covering areas such as the curriculum, personal learning plans, assessment for learning, reading and spelling strategies, information on the use of resources, curriculum structures, learner pathways, study skills, sign posting parents to helpful websites including Education City, Bitesize, Parentzone and Nationals in a Nutshell.

Many establishments encourage parents to attend open days/evenings to share the learning experiences of the children and to encourage the involvement of parents when there are opportunities for parents to learn with their child. Evidence from establishment reviews and HMIE inspections show this as an evidence of strength. Information is provided to parents in a variety of formats, some using Education Scotland templates as a support to customise information to parents. This is delivered in plain English to explain clearly to parents how their children learn and how they can help. Establishments (schools and nurseries) access Renfrewshire Council’s translation service as required.

2. **Whether schools are always flexible enough to allow parents to be involved in their child’s education (given parents work commitments)**

The local authority and establishments continue to explore and develop flexible approaches that allow parents to be involved in their children’s education. Innovative approaches such open mornings, drop in sessions, meet the teacher, show case events, end of day parent meetings, are adopted to allow parents to access and be involved in their child’s learning.
3. **The extent to which schools offer particular support to the parents of pupils from the most disadvantaged communities, in order to improve the attainment of those pupils.**

The effective implementation of Renfrewshire’s Community Planning Partnership Strategy for improving outcomes for children, young people and their families, is reflected in the range of approaches adopted by establishments to build the confidence and capacity of, and accessibility by, parents from the most disadvantaged communities. This includes:

- A consistent approach to targeting support through the extended support framework - GIRFEC/ GIRFEL; child’s plan roll-out and training;
- Nurture approach;
- Evidence based parenting programmes, e.g. PPP, FAST, Incredible Years
- Early years’ strategy – Families First locality teams, Advice Works, targeted support for vulnerable families, Pizza reading group, Families First holiday clubs, voucher schemes, free meals, Early Years Teacher intervention, LAC mentoring team including a designated LAC teacher, opportunities for parents to enhance their own skills in supporting their children with early learning;
- Implementation of 600 hours flexible early learning and childcare provision;
- Implementation of national literacy strategy programmes such as Play Read Talk, Book Bug;,
- Community learning and development, e.g. adult learning sessions in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

4. **Whether there is evidence to demonstrate which approaches are used by schools have been most successful and whether these are being used, as appropriate throughout Scotland.**

The implementation of Renfrewshire’s early years strategy, the early years collaborative, and raising attainment for all is at the early stages within our schools in Renfrewshire although there are early signs of positive impact e.g. the use of reciprocal reading approaches, teachers adopting an enquiring approach to improvement through the School Improvement Partnership Programme and the appropriate use of standardised testing to evidence the success of particular interventions to meet the needs of the individual child and their family. The work of Renfrewshire’s Families First locality teams is currently being evaluated by the University of Glasgow Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change.

5. **Whether greater parental involvement in school education through the Parental Involvement Act (2006) has led to an improvement in pupil attainment.**

The value of greater parental involvement in school education, through the Parental Involvement Act (2006) to engage parents in their child’s education and learning, actively participate in the life of the school and in expressing their views, is recognised. Parental Involvement is a priority in all school improvement plans. Schools and establishments work together with parents to encourage high attainment and achievement. Some parents engage well with establishments across the council however there are still hard to reach parents due to the barriers they may have e.g. difficult school experiences themselves, in full time employment or families in poverty. At this point we have no evidence that parental involvement alone raises attainment.
6. Whether there are any new measures that could be realistically taken by (e.g. the Scottish Government, local authorities, parents’ forums, voluntary sector, etc) to help parents raise their child’s attainment.

Any measures which improve the socio economic standing of parents are likely to lead to raised attainment e.g. funding to extend and spread the benefits of the work of Renfrewshire’s Families First.

An authority wide cross-sectoral working group with the aim of building effective parental engagement is currently developing guidance for establishments on engaging with parents which reflects current national advice. This has been set up to look more closely at engaging with parents and to improve pupil attainment.

This group will be linking with the National and local Parent Forum in order to consult, involve and develop a partnership arrangement in supporting establishments to build capacity within the parents to help raise children’s attainment.

The council has established a ‘tackling poverty’ commission. This group has taken evidence from a broad range of sources including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the author of the report, Sue Ellis. The recommendations were published 13 March 2015. This will undoubtedly include a number of areas for children's services to take forward.

I trust this is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Peter Macleod
Director of Children’s Services