



GATEHOUSE SCHOOL COUNCIL

NOTES for GUIDANCE

May 2007

Introduction:

These guidance notes have been prepared for those on, or entitled to attend meetings of, the School Council – and that includes all parents (the *parent forum*). They are intended to clarify protocols and procedures to ensure the proceedings of the Council – and those of meetings in particular – run as efficiently and smoothly as possible.

These notes should be read in conjunction with the **School Council Constitution**, which was prepared at an open School Board meeting, including wider parental representation, in January 2007. A copy is appended hereto.

This guidance is also intended to help provide an initial framework for the business of the Council, given that time will be needed for members to ‘settle in’, and it can be modified in the light of on-going experience.

What is the School Council?:

The School Council is a group of people with a vested interest in the work and life of the school. This comprises parents, teachers, pupils and members of the wider community. Composition of Gatehouse School Council has been deliberately arranged so as to include opportunities for membership by all of the above groups, in order to enable it to be as wide-ranging in its representation as possible.

The **Functions of the School Council** are:

- Supporting the work of the school,
- Representing views of groups (of the above) to the headteacher, the Education Authority or HMIe,
- Promoting contact between the school, parents, pupils and the local community,
- Reporting to all parents (the *parent forum*),
- Reviewing and amending as necessary the constitution and arrangements for the Council,
- Fundraising to provide additional equipment and resources for the school, and
- Organising or assisting at school events.

The Role of the Headteacher:

The Scottish Education (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 – which prepared the framework for the establishment of Parent/School Councils, includes an update of headteachers’ responsibilities generally. In terms of those specific to this School Council, it determines that the headteacher-

- has a right and duty to attend Council meetings – and is there to support its work,
- should report annually to the School Council, and wider parent body, on the school's performance and the ambitions for the school,
- should receive representations from the School Council, reply to and take the views of the Council into account when carrying out duties, where reasonable and practical,
- should report annually on the content of the school development plan.

Membership of the Council:

The School Council can comprise parents (one *or* two from each class), teachers, pupils and anyone not in one of these groups (i.e. co-opted members). Parents selected to serve on the council should be from those in attendance at the Council's annual general meeting.

Office-bearers:

At the annual general meeting, or the first council meeting thereafter, there shall be elected a chairman (a parent), vice-chairman and treasurer. Other office bearers may be elected from any member of the Council.

Meeting Agendas and Minutes:

The Chairperson is responsible for the running of each meeting. S/he must have an understanding of why each item has been placed on the agenda, how each item should be approached and discussed, and should arrange for copies of the agenda and any associated papers to be sent out, preferably at least a week, prior to each meeting.

The Chairperson should consult the headteacher when preparing the agenda. This enables both to have an input in the business of each meeting. Only agenda items should be discussed (this enables proper preparation to be given to the items for discussion, and ensures business is not over-run by unexpected items). Minutes should be taken of each meeting. These should be signed at each subsequent meeting, prior to which the draft copy should be on display on the school noticeboard. The Council should appoint a secretary (or clerk) who may, unless s/he is a member of the Council, be paid for her/his services.

Speaking at School Council meetings:

Only Council members are entitled to speak at meetings. Non-members may do so if invited to speak by the Chairperson. Any parents, or members of the public, attending meetings should be welcomed, but in order that each meeting runs smoothly, it is advisable for the parent/member of the public to give prior indication of the particular agenda item(s) with which s/he is interested. These arrangements are in place to respect those parents who have been prepared to stand for the School Council

Appendix**Gatehouse School Council****Constitution****Arranged an open Meeting of Gatehouse School Board
on Tuesday 23rd January 2007**

(Under the Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act, 2006, School Boards are to be replaced by a group, or body, of people, to be determined by those associated with each individual school. At the open meeting of Gatehouse School Board held on 23 January 2007, it was decided that, for our school, the Board would be replaced by a 'Council', and the undernoted constitution was prepared, and subsequently issued to all parents by way of consultation).

1. This is the constitution for Gatehouse School Council
2. The objectives of the School Council are:
 - to work in partnership with the school to create a welcoming school which is inclusive to all parents
 - to promote partnership between the school, its pupils and all its parents
 - to develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of the pupils
 - to identify and represent the views of parents on the education provided by the school and others matters affecting the education and welfare of the pupils
3. The membership will be a minimum of 4 parents of children attending the school. The maximum size is 15, two thirds of which should be parents of children attending the school, one parent representing each year group.
4. School Council members will be selected for a period of 2 years, after which members may put themselves forward for re-selection if they wish, as long as they still have a child attending the school.
5. Any parent of a child at the school can volunteer to be a member of the School Council. In the event that the number of volunteers exceeds the number of places set out in the constitution, members will be selected by drawing names out of a hat. Anyone not selected to be a member of the School Council may be offered the opportunity to be part of any subgroups set up by the School Council. Parents will have 3 weeks to select their representatives.
6. The School Council may co-opt up to 5 members to assist with carrying out its function.
7. Co-opted members will be invited to serve for a period of 2 years, after which time the School Council will review and consider requirements for co-opted membership.
8. If the School Council choose to set up sub groups, they should each involve at least one member of the school council. Other members of the parent forum and school community may be co-opted to sub groups. Sub groups will last as long as required to carry out their tasks. Membership should be reviewed annually. The school council members on the sub group will be responsible for liaison with the school council.

9. The Chair and other office bearers of the Council will be agreed by the School Council members immediately following its formation. Office bearers will be re-selected by the School Council on an annual basis. The School Council will be chaired by a parent of a child attending Gatehouse School. If the child ceases to be a pupil, a new chair will be agreed at the next meeting.
10. The School Council is accountable to the Parent Forum for Gatehouse School and will make a report to it at least once each year on its activities on behalf of all the parents.
11. If 30 or 33% (whichever is the lesser) members of the Parent Forum request a special general meeting to discuss issues falling within the Council's remit, the School council shall arrange this. The School Council shall give all members of the Forum at least 2 weeks notice of the meeting and, at the same time, circulate notice of the matter, or matters, to be discussed at the meeting.
12. The annual meeting will be held in spring of each year. A notice of the meeting including, date, time and place will be sent to all members of the Parent Forum at least two weeks in advance. The meeting will include:
 - o a report on the work of the School Council and its committee(s)
 - o selection of the new School Council
 - o discussion of issues that members of the Parent Forum may wish to raise
 - o approval of the accounts and appointment of the auditor
13. The School Council will meet four times a year
14. Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each parent member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
15. Any four members of the School Council can request that an additional meeting be held, and all members of the School Council will be given at least one week's notice of date, time and place of the meeting.
16. If a School Council members acts in a way that is considered by other members to undermine the objectives of the School Council, their membership of the School Council shall be terminated if the majority of school members agree. Termination of membership would be confirmed in writing to the member.
17. Copies of the minutes of all meetings will be available to all parents of children at Gatehouse School and to all teachers at the school. Copies will be available from the Secretary/Clerk of the School Council and from the school office.
18. Meetings of the School Council shall be open to the public, unless the School Council is discussing an issue which it considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis. In such circumstances, only members of the School Council, the head teacher, or his/her representative, and anyone specifically invited to the meeting such as the Director of Education and Community Services can attend.
19. The treasurer will open a bank or building society account in the name of the School Council for all School Council funds. Withdrawals will require the signature of the Treasurer and one other School Council member.

20. The Treasurer will keep an accurate record of all income and expenditure, and will provide a summary of this for each School Council meeting and a full account for the Annual Meeting. The School Council accounts will be audited by the auditor appointed at the previous Annual Meeting.
21. The School Council shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies are used in accordance with the objectives of the School Council
22. The School Council may change its constitution after obtaining consent from members of the Parent Forum. Members of the Parent Forum will be sent a copy of any proposed amendment and given reasonable time to respond to the proposal.
23. Should the School Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the Education Authority to be used for the benefit of the school. If the school is closing or amalgamating the funds will be passed to the schools which pupils will attend.