



# MIDLOTHIAN PARENTS NEWSLETTER

**August 2023**

## Welcome

I hope you all had a pleasant summer and had chance to enjoy the sunshine (even if it was limited). Welcome to our new families who have children joining us in Early Years or Primary 1 and also to those who may have moved into the area and have children who are now joining a Midlothian school. The purpose of this newsletter is to share information about parental involvement and engagement in Midlothian. Building strong and positive relationships with parents/carers is a priority and by working together we can ensure that Midlothian is a 'great place to grow' for our children and young people.



**Gail Currie**

**Parental & Learner Liaison Officer**

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## Introduction



My name is Gail Currie and I've been Midlothian Council's Parental & Learner Liaison Officer for over a year now. I'm a Mum of 3 children who are 20, 17 and 15 (one of whom has medical and additional support needs) and I've worked in different areas in education over the last 10 years from school administration to pupil support. As a parent I have experienced of all settings (nursery, primary and high school) and I've been a member of Parent Council as well as PTA where I baked cakes for fundraising events. I've a real passion for ensuring parents are partners. I believe that children do better when parents and schools work together. It was this belief that made me enter education when I returned to work after raising my family. Parental Engagement is central to my role as well as Pupil Voice and Participation. My favourite part of my job is getting out to chat with parents and learners to tell you what we're working on and listen to what you have to say, especially the children – their honesty is brilliant! I'm currently finalising our new Parental Engagement strategy centred around feedback gathered from the Parent/Carer survey we carried out. I also support Parent Councils and I am the point of contact for parents in the Central Education Team. I can be contacted by emailing [ParentalEngagement@Midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:ParentalEngagement@Midlothian.gov.uk)

## Parent Forum

A school's parent forum automatically includes every parent/carer with a child enrolled at the school – if you have received this newsletter you are in the parent forum. Parent forums are a way for schools to encourage more parents to get involved in school life. They are informal groups where parents can raise issues, be consulted on school policy and give their views.

As a member of the parent forum, you have:

- a right to advice and information about your child's education at the school
- the opportunity to be more involved with what the school is doing
- the opportunity, along with all the other parents, to have your views represented through Parent Council at your school.

## Parent Council – True or False

We've heard it....

"When they're talking about parents getting involved with school and learning, they don't mean me, it's for other parents"

FALSE – we are talking to everyone! Your views are important and we want to hear everyone's opinions and ideas.

"I don't have the skills to be on the Parent Council, you have to have a certain job or experience"

FALSE – Being a parent is all the experience you need! Everyone is welcome and has something to contribute from baking to help fundraise for the school to consulting on policy/planning. We also offer training for those who'd like it.

"Taking part in Parent Council takes up a lot of time"

FALSE – Parent Council is a team effort! Roles such as Chairperson and Secretary are often shared to reduce the time commitment. Being a member isn't about making every meeting or taking on a role, you can add value by simply being involved when you can.

Not all parents feel comfortable to formally join the Parent Council. You may not be able to attend meetings on a regular basis. Some parents may be willing to help out on a more ad-hoc basis. Since COVID-19, many Parent Councils have been meeting online and this has opened up the opportunity for more parents to get involved than previously. Some are now opting to alternate with online and face-to-face meetings.

Being part of a Parent Council may feel like a big task and commitment. The Parent Council operates as a team, and you would not be on your own. Any time that you can give would be appreciated.

You can expect to hear more about the Parent Council in your child's school in the coming weeks. Should you wish further information or supports to take part, please feel free to contact me and I can forward your details onto them.

## Recruitment

Representatives of Parent Councils are key to the recruitment of Senior Management posts in our schools. No previous experience is necessary and we provide training to parents who are interested in being involved. We will be sharing our Parental Engagement calendar for the year in the next few weeks. This includes details of the training sessions for this year and instructions for how to book a place if you are interested.

## Parent Focus Groups

We are in the process of setting up focus groups to look at specific areas of interest to you and for your family. Parent/Carers involvement in these groups will really add value to the work already being undertaken by the Council. The groups are open to all parents not just active Parent Council members. We have chosen are:

- Parent Consultation Group
- Additional Support Needs (ASN) & Inclusion Group
- Equity & Excellence
- Digital Learning Group
- Children's Rights (UNCRC)



If you are interested, please follow this link to learn more about the groups and sign up [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2F-x7f6lOpd2-ITleHYBmSEosKi5SuEVEe9b2N1EicwvVwQ/viewform?usp=pp\\_url](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2F-x7f6lOpd2-ITleHYBmSEosKi5SuEVEe9b2N1EicwvVwQ/viewform?usp=pp_url) Closes 1 September.

Thank you to those who expressed an interest already, I have your contact details and will be in touch soon.

## Financial Assistance – Free School Meals, School Uniform Grant & Education Maintenance Allowance

We provide children from low income families with free school meals and money to help towards buying school clothes.

Young people over the age of 16 staying on at school and living on their own can also apply.

This year clothing grants are £120.00 for primary pupils and £150.00 for secondary pupils.

Applications are open. Parents/Carers can check if they are eligible and apply by visiting

[Free school meals and clothing grants | Midlothian Council](#)

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is:

- for students from low-income families, who are in full-time education after the statutory school leaving age (16+).
- for students attending full time and part time non-advanced college education
- a means tested weekly allowance based on school attendance.
- £30 per week, paid fortnightly into the student's bank account. Payments are only made when students have 100% weekly attendance.

Parents/Carers and Pupils can check if they are eligible and apply by visiting [Education Maintenance Allowance \(EMA\) | Midlothian Council](#).

## Parent Conference – Save the date

We are looking forward to our Parent Conference on Saturday 7 October at Lasswade High School. This is an opportunity for parents/carers to come along and meet other parents as well as hear from our presenters discuss our theme for this year – ‘Keeping our children safe & well’. There will be a chance to get information about a range of supports for parents in Midlothian from our Council colleagues and our partners. We have planned the day so that there is something for everyone. Look out for more information coming from school soon with details of how to secure a place. This event is open to all parents/carers – early years, primary, high school and provisions. I hope to see you there!

