

Submission from Maggie Leung

Below is my response to the questions you posed regarding educational attainment gap - involvement of parents.

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

ANSWER Since the level A-E attainments have been scrapped, I feel that parents are now far less aware of how their children are developing academically. The new way of providing this information to parents (ie. Early, First, Second, Third and Fourth) is very vague. To be told that my child is working at the 'First level' which the guidelines tell means 'to the end of p4 but earlier or later for some' really doesn't tell me anything at all about where she is academically. I think the old system was far more effective. My two teenage children worked their way through these levels and I felt that I was far more aware of their academic level of ability. I also felt that it provided good solid guidelines for teachers to work with, especially in numeracy. For instance, if a child sat Maths level C in p6 and hadn't quite achieved it, the teacher could pinpoint areas of weakness and work in partnership with the parents to rectify this.

2. whether schools are always flexible enough to allow parents to be involved in their child's education (given parents' work commitments, for example)

ANSWER Parent workshops, where teachers give information to parents on how they can help their child at home, are often held straight after school when lots of parents are working. If Glasgow City Council allowed schools to use the building in the evening without charging for the let, this might allow the school to hold evening workshops.

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;

ANSWER I don't think the schools have the resources to do this.

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

ANSWER : East Renfrewshire give feedback to parents regarding their child's attainment levels. I believe that they give information to parents (via report cards) in the form of test marks and also give information on school achievement levels and national achievement levels in the areas of literacy and numeracy. These provide benchmarks for teachers, parents and pupils. Most schools in Glasgow City Council (where my child attends school) have not adopted this policy. Parents are very much in the dark. I know parents, whose children have moved on to high school in recent years and been told that their child is not working at the level of maths/english that would be expected when entering high school. These parents were completely

unaware that this was the case, believing that their children were achieving the academic level appropriate for their age and stage.

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

ANSWER: I think that the level of parental involvement in school education will differ considerably between schools and even between teachers within schools. The cfe framework provides greater flexibility, but with that comes greater differences in how that is delivered.

6. whether there are any new measures that could realistically be taken (for example, by the Scottish Government, local authorities, parents' forums, the voluntary sector, etc) to help parents raise their child's attainment.

ANSWER: Providing parents with accurate information on their child's attainment would be the first steps that would have to be taken. Parents need to be aware that their child's level of attainment is falling below national standards before they can help their child. East Renfrewshire and some other councils have already put this into place. The Scottish Government needs to make it a legal requirement rather than a recommendation that parents are given this information by schools. Perhaps schools could send out questionnaires to parents' forums to find out how other parents feel about this. Do other parents feel that they have enough knowledge about their child's attainment levels? Initiatives such as homework clubs could be set up, with older pupils (primary and secondary school) helping younger pupils with their work and parents also being invited along to be part of this.