

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Foghlaim agus Ionnsachadh Fad-bheatha

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

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To All Parent Council Chairs

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Dear Parent Council Chair

On taking up post as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, I said that I wanted to work together with everyone involved in the education of children and young people. As parents you are vital partners in making our education system even more successful, helping children to achieve their best and for raising standards for all. I want to work with you and listen and learn from you.

I know that much has been achieved over the past two years and that Parent Councils have come a long way since they were established in 2007. I am encouraged by what I hear so far and look forward to meeting many of you as I visit schools. I welcome the fact that we now have Parent Councils in over 92% of our schools, with a much wider range and greater number of parents involved than was previously the case. Many of you and your Parent Councils are already making a real difference in your own school and to the education delivered there. I hear of the very wide range of interesting ways in which you gather and represent parents' views and help to extend all parents' involvement in children's learning. I also pay tribute to your dedication, hard work and commitment and that of the parents, Headteachers and local authorities who have also encouraged and made this possible.

At local and regional level, I am pleased to see that you and your Parent Councils are making your voices heard, speaking up on issues that are important to parents, and joining together with other Parent Councils in your area to share practice, experience and to work with your local authorities in a spirit of partnership.

As you know, my predecessor Fiona Hyslop gave her wholehearted commitment and support to providing an opportunity for parents to have a voice at national level. I very much wish to continue what she started. It was good to hear that the new National Parent Forum held such a very successful first meeting last November, bringing together Parent Council representatives from 30 of Scotland's local authorities. I was also glad to see a good number of the Forum's members at the consultation event for the education community which I held in mid December, speaking up for parents and making their voice heard. I look forward to a regular dialogue with the new Forum, and to supporting it as best I can.

I am aware that we all have to face some tough times ahead, particularly as a result of the current financial situation. However, I passionately believe that we have much to build on in Scottish education, and parents have a crucial role to play in this. Curriculum for Excellence offers us all a challenging opportunity to improve standards in learning and teaching to the benefit of all young people. We need parents and you and your Parent Councils to be very much a part of the overall endeavours and the successes in our schools and in every aspect of education and learning.

I look forward to working with you and getting to know more of you and your Parent Councils over the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Russell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**MICHAEL RUSSELL**