

NKS International Parents Forum meeting

14th May 2012

The Parents forum meeting was attended by over 40 South Asian women. Claire Soper, International manager Edinburgh City Council, Alex Wallace, and Eileen Simpson from the EAL (English as an additional Language) from the City Council were present to give a range of information to women.

Alex Wallace spoke about Curriculum for Excellence in schools, and Eileen Simpson talked about EAL and ethnic minority community pupils in schools.

Curriculum for Excellence: Alex explained that the curriculum for excellence language is complicated and even teachers don't understand it fully. He said that regular information should come to parents. There are websites that parents can access (www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk), but information will be passed on via pupils to parents. The style of work will change and 2nd and 3rd year pupils will go into a new system.

Under curriculum of excellence there is a focus on four capacities:

1. Successful learners
2. Confident individuals
3. Responsible citizens
4. Effective contributors

There are seven principles in curriculum:

1. Challenge and enjoyment
2. Breadth
3. Progression
4. Depth
5. Personalisation and choice
6. Coherence and
7. Relevance

Subjects will not change but there will be 8 curriculum areas:

1. Expressive arts
2. Health and wellbeing
3. Languages
4. Mathematics
5. Religious and moral education
6. Sciences
7. Social studies
8. Technologies

The curriculum of excellence will apply from 3 years to 18 years of age. There will be three stages of curriculum:

1. From 3 years of age to P3
2. From P4 to P6
3. From P7 to secondary school

There is a lot of team work involved between parents and teachers in the new system. Partnership with parents is crucial. Parents can; play, talk read for children, spend time together, show interest, praise, encourage, support, ask about children's interests and challenges and ask how they are feeling.

In secondary schools there is not a significant change and many schools have been working for a while in Curriculum of Excellence. In future, secondary schools will be organised into two three-year blocks; S1 to S3 and S4 to S6. The new qualifications – National 4 replacing General and Intermediate 1 and National 5 replacing Credit and Intermediate 2, will be sat for the first time in 2014. Until then the students will continue to sit the existing qualifications. The National 4 and 5 qualifications will be taught in a common course covering both levels, but with different assessments for each level. The National 4 will be assessed internally and will be ungraded and the National 5 will be assessed externally and will be graded.

Eileen did a presentation on EAL services and the kind of support available to ethnic minority community parents. Some of the issues that were voiced by parents in the meeting are as follows:

- There should be foundation classes for children of P6 and P7 to help them get ready for secondary school. It was pointed out that senior pupils in school are trained to work with juniors in relation to such support.
- The new system emphasise a lot on parental involvement, but who will identify and then support with barriers faced by ethnic minority parents.
- Parents did not have enough information about support assistants and their role in the class room. They didn't realise that support assistants were also a link between parents and school teachers.
- Parent and teacher meetings are a difficult area for ethnic minority parents. They need a lot of support to attend the meetings.
- Parents from ethnic minority communities lack confidence to attend school meetings without any support.
- What are race equality policies and procedures and how are parents informed about these.
- If there are consultative support groups in school, then how should ethnic minority parents be encouraged to get involved?
- How do community projects communicate and link with schools to support ethnic minority parents and children.
- Parents from ethnic minority communities need to be educated through training sessions – how to get involved with their children's schooling.
