

## A Parent's Charter

### Introduction

CASE calls for a charter that protects parents' rights and promotes parents as partners in schools and in the education of their children.

We do not believe that the current emphasis that the government puts on promoting "choice" provides sufficient safeguards for parents. Instead, proposals to increase the types of schools by introducing foundation, trust schools and academies undermines parental rights and influence within schools, and in some cases actually restrict parents' choices.

### Consultation on Change

CASE wants a presumption in favour of clear statutory guidance that enshrines parents' right to meaningful consultation.

- Governing bodies should be required to ensure that consultation is a full and fair process when they are considering any major change, such as taking foundation status. The guidance must cover the nature of the information to be provided, include timescales of any legal processes and the right of a majority of parents to reject such a proposal.
- Similarly, Local Authorities should be required to ensure that meaningful consultation when proposing to open new schools or close existing ones. Again, this must include the information to be provided and the timescales and mechanisms to ensure the views of local parents are properly considered. Parents should be able to choose the type of new school.
- For academies, full details of their individual Funding Agreement must be made available to all parents in the local community as part of a full consultation process in the local area. In existing schools, the right for a majority of parents must exist to reject a proposal for an academy.

### Statutory Rights

There must be:

- A statutory Code of Practice on Admissions, binding on all schools and with a robust mechanism to ensure that schools comply.

- Statutory rights under existing education law in all schools on admissions, exclusions and children with special needs, including mechanisms for an independent appeal.
- Mandatory guidance to require schools to have clear written policies and procedures on key aspects of school life, including an independent complaints procedure.

### Partnership working

CASE wants to see:

- The government introduce a statutory requirement for all schools to set up a Parent Council based on the CASE model.
- All schools to actively promote parental involvement through Parent Councils and other home-school organisations.
- Parents to be encouraged to attend by providing crèche facilities where there is a need.
- Regular "Headteachers' Surgeries" to encourage parents to engage in one-to-one discussions.
- Regular parents' evenings and review days where parents can meet class- and subject-teachers.
- A formal termly report on every child's progress in primary school and for all students in secondary schools and sixth forms.
- Clear systems for home-school communication (e.g. a day book) which enables parents and teachers to quickly identify any issues for the child.
- Special meetings with all parents at transition points e.g. entry to nursery or reception, secondary school transfer, GCSEs and A level choices, at which the expectations parents, children and the school are clearly identified.
- Clear written information for all parents (translated as necessary) on the different key stages.
- Regular newsletters with a sections for the governing body, parent councils and other home-school organisations
- Websites that are regularly updated



# Campaign for State Education – Policy Paper

## **Inclusion**

CASE calls for:

- A requirement for all schools to show how they encourage parental involvement, including that of “hard to reach” parents.
  - The encouragement of parents to come to the school through, for instance, use of community facilities or other opportunities to break down barriers and build confidence.
  - Staff time to be made available to contact individual parents at home about issues concerning their children and to encourage them to come to parents meetings.
  - Each school to have a strategy for communicating with parents who have difficulty with written English e.g. providing translation at key meetings for those parents who need it.
  - The full implementation of the Steer Report with its focus on respect, policies on behaviour and preventative approach to exclusions.
  - The implementation of the Steer Report recommendation that every school should have a Pupil-Parent Support Worker in place by September 2007. This post should be funded at a level that will allow an appropriate salary to be paid to attract high calibre staff.
- i the Code of Practice on Admissions;
  - ii the Code on Exclusions (including having independent appeals panels for exclusion hearings, and all decisions to be reported to Governing Bodies)
  - iii the legislation which covers maintained schools in respect of children with statements
  - iv complaints procedures
- The right of parents to withdraw their children from collective worship and religious education.
  - The teaching of the National Curriculum and the placing of restrictions on the way in which creationism and “biblical truth” can be represented in schools.
  - A requirement for Academies to agree holiday dates in line with local LEA guidelines

## **Accountability**

CASE believes in accountability through a Governing Body. We call for a stakeholder model of governance with equal representation from all parties, including the LEA or sponsor, the community, staff and elected parents, and whose chair is elected by the local governing body (and not appointed by a sponsor)

## **Rights in Academies**

CASE considers that parents and their children attending Academies are entitled to the same rights and protections in law as those in maintained schools. The system of confidential Funding Agreements made between the sponsor and the DfES does not offer this.

### **CASE calls for:**

- The Funding Agreements of Academies to be required to provide the same rights for parents and pupils as maintained schools in respect of:

## **Moving Forward**

### ***The Extended School Agenda***

CASE believes that there should be:

- Workshops for parents on issues such as bullying, equal opportunities, and adolescence
- Family learning initiatives to support parents who have had a poor educational experience themselves
- Workshops/parents evenings to explain subject areas and how parents can support their children’s learning
- Family/school outings to promote social and cultural understanding
- A wide range of after school child care, sporting, creative and learning opportunities for students and their families

Feedback on this document will be gratefully received. You can contact CASE by post c/o 98 Erlanger Road, London, SE14 5TH, by phone on 07932 149 942, or by email at [contact@campaignforstateeducation.org.uk](mailto:contact@campaignforstateeducation.org.uk) Our website is: [www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk](http://www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk)

CASE has been campaigning on education issues for over 40 years and relies entirely on membership fees to fund its activities.