Section 1 - Introduction

1 Do you agree with the vision for inclusive education in Scotland?

Yes

If you selected yes or no, please explain why you either agree or disagree with this definition. If you disagree, please offer alternative suggestions.:

We agree that it is appropriate to base a definition on key factors of “Present, Participating, Achieving and Supported”.

2 Do you agree with these principles?

Yes

If you selected yes or no, please outline why.:

While we agree with the principles, for inclusion to lead to successful outcomes for learners, all of these principles (present, participating, achieving and supported) must be evident. It is our concern that sometimes, a child's parents or carers may be the ones who are being “included”, while the outcomes in mainstream are not achieving for the individual child. Simply being “present” alone is not sufficient. A child must be able to participate meaningfully, and further must have access to the required levels of support. Support services for mainstream schools have been pared back to such a high degree due to budgetary pressures at local authority level that it is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to provide the requisite levels of support, without which, any definition of inclusive practice becomes highly undermined.

Section 2 – Key features of inclusion – present, participating, achieving and supported

3 Are the expectations set out under each of the ‘present, participating, achieving and supported’ principles the right ones?

Yes

If you selected yes or no, please explain why. If you have said no, please offer alternative measures.:

The Royal High School Parent Council is broadly supportive of the expectations within the principles. It is more how these are then operated in practice on which the Parent Council has comments to make - see later response.

Section 3 – Deciding on the right provision for a child or young person

4 Are the entitlements and options for provision clear?

Yes

If you selected no, please suggest ways in which this section might be improved. Please state the relevant paragraph numbers.:

The entitlements are clear.

Parental opinion on these subjects can broadly be grouped into the following three areas:

- there are young people currently flourishing in mainstream education who would not have had such opportunities to develop and participate were it not for the presumption to mainstream

- there are young people who the presumption to mainstream is failing, as they are not receiving the specialist support which should be afforded to them and which may have been available had they received the opportunity of a special school education

- there are young people whose education sometimes is disrupted by other young people for whom the presumption to mainstream is not working

Plainly looking at the consultation document, placing the child at the centre of any decisions should avoid most issues with children being misplaced in mainstream. However, the Parent Council has deep concerns over the funding and support services available to mainstream schools to enable them to properly develop programmes for each young person. The presumption to mainstream is founded on the basis that proper resources are made available, and that regional/local authority services are on hand to provide their expertise. Often, these services have been either scaled back or removed entirely due to budgetary pressures, with no additional support sometimes available to schools to ensure that inclusion operates as intended. The "presumption to mainstream" also infers that there is an alternative to mainstream provision available for young people. In some local authority areas, there are no special schools, while in others, a number have closed. In such circumstances, inclusion may be the only option for a young person, whether or not it is the most appropriate option.

Finally, we as parents fully understand the needs for parents and carers to feel "included", but sometimes are concerned that pressure from parents and carers for themselves to be part of mainstream education can over-ride that notion of the child being at the centre of the decision-making process, and ensuring that the child's needs, not the parents', are always to the fore.

Section 4 - How and why could the exemptions be applied?
5 Is the commentary and the reflective questions on each of the exceptions helpful?

Yes

If you selected no, please suggest ways in which the commentary and reflective questions might be improved.:
The exemptions seem fit for purpose, and we preface what we say here with the point made previously - that a number of children are achieving fantastic outcomes which would not have been possible prior to the presumption to mainstream.

However, we are concerned that headteachers are not fully empowered to use the "would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom the child would be educated" exemption.

In our local authority "locality area" (a City Council way of grouping schools and resources), we are fully aware of schools where classes are "evacuated" on a regular basis due to a pupil becoming violent or aggressive; we also saw recently at a local primary school not only examples of classroom evacuations, but also the destruction of other children's work (both ripping it up and defacing it) from a child who is currently in mainstream provision. These examples arise frequently.

The point at which other children's work is being destroyed, for example, would seem a clear indication to most parents that the exemption should apply. Headteachers, however, perhaps feel reluctant to go down this route. We think this is in part due to parental pressure, but mainly due to pressure from local authorities due to lack of resources and provision anywhere other than mainstream.

In summary, the exemptions are clear - but they must be of use in practice and not just in theory.

Section 5 – Delivering Inclusion

6 Are there any areas missing, requiring strengthening, or which are not required and could be removed?

No

If you selected yes, please suggest ways in which this section might be improved. Please refer to relevant paragraph numbers.:
The Parent Council only notes here, on the capacity to deliver inclusion, our previous points on the resources required to deliver inclusion as intended. Without the adequate resources, any principles around delivery are almost meaningless.

7 Were the case studies helpful?

Yes

If yes, please say why and if you would like further case studies or are content with the current number. If you selected no, please explain why and what would be helpful instead.:
We are satisfied with the information provided here.

General

8 Overall, is the guidance helpful?

Yes

If you selected no, please explain your answer. If you selected yes, please indicate what was particularly helpful.:
Overall, yes the guidance is helpful but to reiterate, for it to work:

- the child must remain at the centre of the process
- for a presumption to mainstream to exist, there must also be a suitable alternative
- while some children are achieving amazing outcomes as a result of the presumption, the guidance must also recognise that other children may achieve best outcomes with non-mainstream targeted support
- support for those delivering inclusive education must be properly resourced
- the guidance cannot assume that the support services which were in place when the presumption to mainstream was first established are still in place
- and the exemptions must be genuine options for headteachers and local authorities.

9 Are there any other comments you would wish to make about the draft guidance on presumption of mainstreaming?

Are there any other comments you would wish to make about the draft guidance on presumption of mainstreaming?:

About You

What is your name?

Name: Luke McCullough

What is your email address?
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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?
Organisation

What is your organisation?
Organisation:
The Royal High School Parent Council

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:
Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?
Yes

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.: 

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:
Very satisfied

Please enter comments here.: