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‘Parents are generally unconcerned about what their children do in school’

Whatever you think of the statement, Parental Eye wants to hear from you if you are a parent, carer or professional working with children and young people.

Parental Eye is self-help group of parents who are concerned about the education experience of our children: we think our children could be doing, and deserve, better.

Perhaps you are a parent who is experiencing difficulties and are unsure of where to turn. Perhaps you a person working in education who wants to see parents more actively involved in supporting their children at school.

Parental Eye is organising a series of forums to give parents a chance to raise and tackle issues of concern in an informal setting. The forums will also help us to chart the course for equipping parents to meet the needs of their children and build a better future.

Our aim is to establish a network for the proliferation of information, support and advice to parents who want to know and do more about the way their children are learning, but don't know where to start.

‘Many parents find it very difficult to find the time to really support their children with homework, especially after a hard day at work themselves,’ says project coordinator, Denise Roberts. ‘Sometimes you may even find yourself out of your depth trying to help your child with some subject you barely understood yourself while at school.

‘And where do parents go to get comprehensive information and support if they are unhappy with a situation at school?’

‘Too often I have heard statements made such as that stated at the outset – that parents just can't be bothered or are uninterested in what their children are doing at school. I think the situation is far more complex and cannot be explained by sweeping generalities.

‘The work undertaken by Diane Abbott MP to raise the issue of how the school system is failing black boys¹, for example, has met with huge responses and has shown just how much parents really do care. Following a conference held by the MP to discuss the issue last year, London Mayor Ken Livingstone said: “Never again will people accuse parents of being unconcerned about their children's education”.

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'The trouble is, parents often don't know where to start. We want to put parental power and responsibility on par with any other professional input to our children's education and future, and we intend to start now.'

End/

Editors notes

Parental Eye forums are scheduled as follows:

Saturday 8th May 2004 from 1.00pm to 4.00pm at The Destiny Training Centre, Unit 9 Bayford Street Business Centre, Bayford Street, London E8 3RE

Saturday 15th May 2004 from 2.00pm to 5.00pm at the Evangelical Alliance Conference Suite, Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT

The forums will be informal settings where we will outline our aims and objectives and invite parents and carers to share their concerns. Light refreshment will be provided.

Preferably, attendees should register in advance. To register, and for further information, contact Denise Roberts on 0845 226 85 51 or 07931 322 976 or by sending an email to info@parentaleye.co.uk

Parental Eye is a self-help group of parents who are making an effort to improve our children's experience in the classroom. It champions approaches to parental involvement and partnerships with local and central government agencies.

¹ Diane Abbott MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington has been organising the London Schools and the Black Child conferences for the past three years and these have seen attendance from parents not just outside of the borough, but outside of the capital, too. Last year, delegates head that African Caribbean boys are half as likely to leave school with five A-C GCSEs as their other counterparts.