CORNWALL COUNCIL
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Together for Families

Parent Carer Engagement Framework

for education settings



In partnership with

Parent Carers Cornwall

Contents

04 **Foreword**

05 Section 1/ **Introduction**

08 Section 2/ **The importance of parent carer engagement to support educational outcomes**

12 Section 3/ **How to use the Framework and Toolkit**

16 Section 4/ **The Framework: principles, criteria and descriptors**

17 Principle 1: A Whole School Approach
22 Principle 2: A Welcoming School: Our Culture, Attitudes and Approach
27 Principle 3: Communications
31 Principle 4: Support for Learning
35 Principle 5: Community Matters
39 Principle 6: Raising and Realising Aspiration
43 Principle 7: Addressing the Barriers to Parent Carer Engagement

47 Section 5: **The Toolkit: A set of resources to support the achievement of each principle**

48 **Principle 1: A whole school approach**
49 Audit tool overview
51 Audit tool
61 A policy for parent carer engagement overview
62 Example primary school parent carer partnership policy
69 Example secondary school parent carer partnership policy
72 Governance overview
73 Evaluation

75 **Principle 2: A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach**
76 Welcoming and engaging families overview
77 Welcoming and engaging parent carers, ideas and strategies
82 Action planning framework
83 Welcoming and including families gap analysis
85 Planning for change
92 Core values overview
93 Core values

94 **Principle 3: Communications**
95 Guide to effective communications overview (parts 1-3)
96 Guide to effective communications (part 1); the leaders role
98 Guide to effective communications (part 2); improving your communication
100 Guide to effective communications (part 3); communication methods
102 Training for positive and effective consultations overview
103 Training: diamond nine activity, positive communication
106 Training: key features of effective consultation meetings
108 Training: framework for the effective consultation
109 Training: stem questions to ask during an effective consultation
110 Training: effective consultations – observation record
112 Effective communications case study – Stratton Primary School

115 Principle 4: Support for learning
116 Auditing, reviewing and developing approaches to home learning overview
118 Homework/home learning audit
120 Support for learning toolkit
123 Covid-19 support resources from the education endowment foundation
124 Reading and maths programmes
125 Everyone ready for school
126 Family learning
127 Re-thinking parent's evenings
129 Systematic practice and formulation
131 Case study Pondhu Primary School – systematic formulation

133 Principle 5: Community matters
134 Community events overview
135 Community events - engaging with your community
137 Youth social action toolkit overview
139 Devoran Primary School: a case study

141 Principle 6: Raising and realising aspirations
142 Engaging parent carers in aspirations and careers learning

146 Principle 7: Addressing the barriers to parental engagement
148 Parent ambassador overview
149 A parent ambassador rationale
151 Barriers to parent carer engagement training overview
152 Diamond 9 activity: Barriers to parent and carer engagement
154 Overcoming barriers to parent carer engagement presentation

169 Section 6/ **Further information and resources**

172 Section 7/ **References**

Foreword

Cornwall Council recognises that parent carers and families are the most important influences in a child's life. Parental involvement and engagement in early learning and school influences a pupil's achievement and wellbeing.

Our vision is that:

- All parent carers and families will be warmly welcomed within our schools. They will be encouraged to play an important role within the school community.
- Parent carers will be supported and encouraged to become actively engaged in their child's learning and development, both in school and at home, providing consistency of approach to enable our young people to achieve.
- Cornwall Council is committed to enhancing existing partnerships with parent carers and families and establishing clear routes of communication. This will allow schools to maintain an ongoing dialogue with families about their children's learning, report on progress being made and reflect together.

This framework is designed to support schools in developing further the engagement of parent carers in a child's learning to support our aspirations that Cornwall is a brilliant place to grow up.

Kate Evans-Hughes
Strategic Director for Together for Families

The Parent Carer Forum believe that this is an important Framework. We know the best outcomes for a child/young person can be achieved when families and schools work together.

Parental engagement with a child/young person's learning is supported to its fullest when communication is a two-way process.

Every child and young person matters. Once this Framework is integrated into a whole school approach it will build strong positive relationships between school and home.

We fully support and welcome the development of the Framework.

Kay Henry
Chair of Cornwall Parent Carers Forum

Section 1

Introduction to Cornwall's parent carer engagement framework



Parental engagement in children's learning makes a difference – it is the most powerful school improvement lever we have.

Harris and Goodall (2007)

Closing gaps in educational achievement is an ongoing priority for all schools.

Over many decades, both national attainment data and research findings have consistently shown that, on average, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve well below their more advantaged peers. At the heart of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) is an ambitious curriculum for all and therefore inclusion and 'diminishing the disadvantage' lies central to its purpose. Yet the education gap 'stubbornly' refuses to close (see section 3). The importance of parent carer engagement in raising aspirations and achievement particularly for the disadvantaged pupils has been widely acknowledged (Goodall 2017; Education Endowment Foundation 2020).

The purpose of this resource is to set out a Framework and Toolkit for the development of a Parent Carer Engagement Framework in order to support the quality of educational outcomes for all children and young people in Cornwall.

In sections 1 and 2 of the document an overview of the importance and the challenges of parent carer engagement is discussed. This is then reflected upon in the context of Cornwall, the attainment gap and the desire to work in partnership with parent carer and families to ensure they are involved with the implementation and future development of Cornwall's education strategy.

Section 3 outlines how to use the toolkit. Section 4 takes each of the 7 principles in turn and provides a set of criteria, descriptors and resources to support implementation in the local context of the individual education setting. Section 5 is the toolkit which has range of practical resources and guidance.

Section 6 is where you can find further information about a range of organisations and useful websites. Section 7 identifies key references which can further inform your strategy for implementation of parental engagement.

One of Cornwall Councils four key priority areas is that Cornwall is 'A brilliant place to be a child and grow up'. We want every child to have the best start in life and an equal chance of a bright future here in Cornwall. The voices and views of children and young people to get the most out of growing up in Cornwall and gain the skills to access new jobs in our changing economy.

(Cornwall Council's business plan 2022-2026)





At the heart of this vision is the importance of partnership between the school, local community and families in raising the aspirations and achievement for all children and young people. This is endorsed through the new Cornwall Plan, Together We Can (2020-2050); the Together for Families Belonging Framework focused on social, school and cultural inclusion. It also compliments the Rights Respecting Schools Framework founded on Article 29 of the Convention of Human Rights which states that education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. Equity, inclusion and the voice of children and young people are fundamental to a rights-based approach to education. Success and achievement for all is at the heart of the Right to Education and the principle of Non-Discrimination (Article 2) underpins all that schools do to accelerate the progress of all and minimise gaps in attainment (for further details see section 3). A framework for parent carer engagement could significantly contribute to enacting this vision.

Led by the school education effectiveness team and supported by a Together for Families working group, early years settings, representation from Cornwall parent carer forum and schools, we have developed this parent carer engagement framework and accompanied by a range of practical resources.

These are outlined here:

- A framework based on principles and criteria for building the education settings' approach, structured around seven themes.
- Descriptors for what all education settings should be doing as well as what successful schools do – aiming to provide a direction of travel for future work.
- A 'selection box' of practical resources and references that education settings can pick and choose from, each designed to encourage reflection, action planning, and to provide practical examples.

This resource is designed to be a working document that supports education settings in the development of parent carer engagement strategy and to be central to the work they do to raise aspirations and achievement. Transformation is our long-term goal.





All children, young people and families in Cornwall are entitled to world class education that helps them to achieve the best possible outcomes at every stage



Section 2

The importance of parent carer engagement to support educational outcomes



Parental engagement focuses on ways in which parents, carers and families support and encourage their children's learning in school and in everyday life. Schools and partners can play a vital role in supporting families to do this effectively and with confidence.

(The Scottish Government 2017)

The importance of parent carer engagement in children's learning is widely acknowledged (Goodall 2017; EEF 2020)**, the evidence suggests that it has many benefits, including improvements in literacy and maths skills** (Van Voorhis et al. 2013)**, better school attendance** (McConnell and Kubina 2014) **and closure of the achievement gap** (Goodall 2017)**.**

According to recent surveys of schools in England, the majority (80%) of school leaders believe that engaging parents is the responsibility of all staff and almost all teachers believe that parent carer engagement has a positive impact on their school (Axford et al 2019). However, relatively few (28%) school leaders report that they currently provide staff with any training about how to engage parents or have a plan for how they would like staff to work with parents (Parent Teachers Association survey 2017).

It is important to acknowledge the difference and the overlap between involvement and engagement for parent carers. Involvement most often focuses on parent carer getting involved in the life and work of the education setting including schools encouraging on-going, two-way communication. Parents may be provided opportunities to contribute to school improvement.

Engagement most often refers to their child/young person learning at home, at school, and in the wider community. Engagement is supported by discussion between parents/practitioners and focuses on how families can build on what they already do to help their children's learning and provide a supportive home learning environment. Engagement represents a greater 'commitment, ownership of action' than mere involvement (Goodall and Montgomery 2014).

It is recognised that there is a continuum between involvement and engagement. The movement between the two represents a 'shift in emphasis, away from the relationship between parents and schools, to a focus on the relationship between parents and their children's learning' (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). The continuum should not be considered as a straight pathway, nor a clear progression from one point to another, it should be viewed as a web of interactions (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Identifying effective interventions to support parent carers to get involved, (especially those who are unable to, or have chosen not to engage with their child/young person's school or learning) remains an ongoing priority (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011).





Parent carer engagement is heavily linked to socio-economic status, as well as their own lived experience of education. Children and young people whose parent carers have high expectations tend to have more perseverance, greater intrinsic motivation to learn and more confidence in their own ability. Limited parent carers engagement in low income families is responsible for 20% of the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their wealthier peers. However, research has shown that parent carer engagement in their child's learning positively impacts on both learning and achievement and schools can play a strong role in supporting this process (Warren et al 2009; Lucas 2010; Lendrum, Barlow and Humphrey 2013; Goodall 2013and Goodall and Montgomery2013).

Parent carer engagement is often seen as periphery to the school improvement plan rather than a more holistic and sustained model. Best practice is where schools have a parent carer engagement policy and practices in their own right which are directly linked to the teaching and learning policy. Schools should plan, monitor and review this approach complimented by the time, resources and appropriate staff training. Successful schools have a clear understanding of the unique needs and challenges of their local community.

Effective parent carer engagement is a two-way process .It requires deeper, more meaningful links than simply a periphery involvement in school based activities. Schools that successfully engage parent carers in learning consistently reinforce the fact that 'parents matter'. They develop a two-way relationship with parents based on mutual trust, respect and a commitment to improving learning outcomes.

The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) recent guidance report Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning (2020) acknowledges that 'parental engagement in children's learning and the quality of the home learning environment are associated with improved academic outcomes at all ages'. The EEF report does emphasise the importance for schools to plan, support, review and evaluate their parent carer engagement approaches to check that they are having their intended impacts. Consideration should be given to the fact that strategies for engagement will be different for children and young people across age groups and stages of development.

Effective parent carer engagement and an ambitious curriculum for all can support the closing of the education gap which remains an important priority (Deforges 2003); DfE 2011 Achievement for All 2014 Goodall 2017; EIF 2019; EEF 2020).The Education Policy Institute (EPI) Annual Report (2020) finds that:

- The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has stopped closing for the first time in a decade. Policymakers have not succeeded in responding to earlier reports warning of a major loss of momentum in closing the gap.
- Disadvantaged pupils in England are 18.1 months of learning behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs – the same gap as five years ago.
- The gap at primary school increased for the first time since 2007 – which may signal that the gap is set to widen in the future.
- The stalling of the gap occurred even before the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the education system.
- Researchers have identified the increasing proportion of disadvantaged children in persistent poverty as a contributory cause of the lack of progress with narrowing the disadvantage gap.

Effective parent carer engagement and an ambitious curriculum for all can support the closing of the education gap which remains an important priority

Cornwall

At the time the Parent Carer Engagement Framework was conceived, performance data for education settings within Cornwall provided compelling evidence of need.

Although the South-West has relatively low numbers of disadvantaged pupils compared with other regions, historically it has shown some of the poorest outcomes for this group, in terms of both attainment and progress, and across both primary and secondary phases of education.

There is evidence that this 'stubborn' gap, between the performance of those children who are from disadvantaged families, compared to their less disadvantaged peers; remains: in fact over the past decade, the gap has, in the best cases, stagnated, but in some of the worst cases widened; leaving the life chances of disadvantaged children living in Cornwall significantly reduced. Persistent absenteeism remains a challenge that many schools in Cornwall continue to face, as well as managing challenging behaviours that can, in the most extreme cases, lead to suspension or exclusion for children and young people.

What is more, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic continues to be felt in many households and education settings and remains a barrier to tackling educational disadvantage. Statistics show that children from disadvantaged families have been, and continue to be, disproportionately negatively impacted by the effects of the pandemic and an awareness of this should underpin any approach to addressing the inequalities that exist and helping to heal the 'social contract' between schools and families that may have fractured as a result of the pandemic.

The Parent Engagement Framework provides a welcome and practical tool that can be adapted and implemented across the broad range of education settings that exist within the Duchy, supporting them to work in partnership with their communities to address social and educational inequalities.

The 'stubborn' educational gap remains in Cornwall. The case for a Framework to support parent carer engagement in Cornwall's education settings and the wider context is compelling.







Section 3

How to use the framework and toolkit



The framework and accompanying toolkit are designed to be a guidance document drawing together the evidence from the research and examples of good practice. It is not prescriptive but provides a structure within which education settings can apply the principles within their local context.

There are seven principles within the Framework...

1 / **Embedding a whole school approach**

2 / **A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach**

3 / **Communication**

4 / **Support for learning**

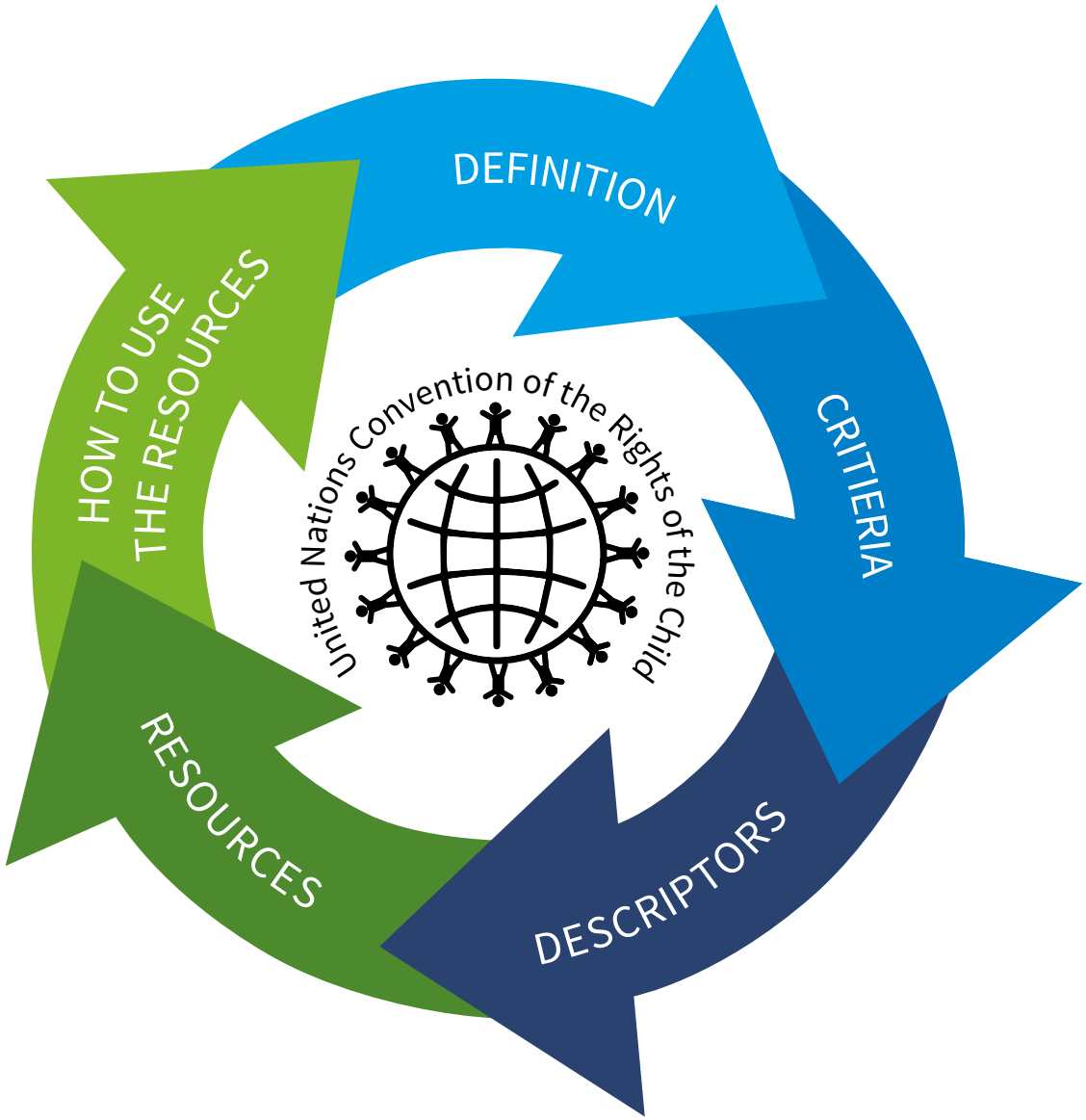
5 / **Community matters**

6 / **Raising and realising aspirations**

7 / **Addressing barriers to parental engagement**

With each principle there are: -

- Criteria for building the education setting's approach.
- Descriptors for what all settings should be doing, as well as what successful schools do – aiming to provide a direction of travel for future work.
- A 'selection box' of practical resources and references that education settings can pick and choose. Each is designed to encourage reflection, action planning, and to provide examples.



Each principle helps to meet Children's Rights as indicated in the table below.

Principle	Children's rights
1. Embedding a whole school approach Parent carer engagement should not be periphery to the school improvement plan but part of a more holistic and sustained model. Many case studies of schools with exceptionally good engagement show that strong leadership from the top is the single most important ingredient. Best practice is found where schools have a parent carer engagement policy and practices in their own right which are directly linked to the teaching and learning policy.	The principle of a whole school approach upholds children's rights to non-discrimination (article 2), considering their best interests (article 3), the right to develop to their full potential (article 6) as well as article 18 (parental responsibilities and state assistance) which highlights the duties to provide parents with the support and help needed to raise their children
2. A welcoming school. Welcoming families to engage with the school and fostering the development of mutual trust and respect between school and home is the foundation from which effective engagement can be built.	The principle of a welcoming school upholds children's rights to non-discrimination (article 2), considering their best interests (article 3), the right to develop to their full potential (article 6) as well as enabling children to enjoy their right to education, be treated with dignity and to fully develop their personality, talents and abilities (articles 28 and 29, UNCRC)
3. Communication Effective communications are at the very heart of effective parent carer engagement. Every setting needs to have clear lines of communication established which are tailored to the needs of their wider community and form the basis of a two-way relationship.	As above, plus article 18 (parental responsibilities)
4. Support for learning School-based family and parent carer support activities, with a grounding in more structured, evidence-based programmes produce positive outcomes for learners.	Upholds: Article 18 (Parental responsibilities and state support) Article 5 (parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities)
5. Community matters Effective settings provide parent carers with a supportive learning and education community in which to thrive and grow. The school should aspire to provide parent carers with a sense of belonging to a shared set of community values, interests and attitudes.	Promotes: Article 31 (leisure, play and culture)
6. Raising and realising aspirations This principle enables you to address the relevance and power of widening, raising and realising aspirations for children and young people's future life chances. Settings can tap into parental desire to raise happy and successful children by making links between what they are learning now and how this will help them to access and navigate future opportunities. Children/young people's aspirations are the things they hope to achieve for themselves in future, including skills, hobbies and interests in addition to any career goals.	Consideration and upholding of: Article 29 (goals of Education), Article 31 (leisure, play and culture) Article 13 (Freedom of Expression) and Article 17 (access to information from the media) To access information and resources to support decision making and expressing themselves, Article 12 (right to be heard)
7. Addressing barriers to engagement Settings will able to identify and implement strategies to support diverse and inclusive ways to bridge complex barriers.	Consideration and upholding of wider rights including: Article 24 (health and health services), Article 26 (social security), Article 27 (adequate standard of living, Article 23 (children with a disability), Article 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups), Article 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration

As a first step it would be useful to look at principle 1, a whole school approach and to use the audit resource to identify the strengths and areas of development for your setting. You can then build a planned approach which should be carefully monitored and evaluated. Evidence based practice that can clearly demonstrate impact is the vehicle for change and sustainability.

A planned approach that sets out your goals in a three-year development plan and then identified the SMART targets, outcomes and actions in the annual school improvement plan will provide a structured and progressive journey that is likely to lead to longer term impact.

Evidence based practice that can clearly demonstrate impact is the vehicle for change and sustainability







Section 4

The Framework: Principles, criteria and descriptors

Principle 1: **A whole school approach**
Principle 2: **A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach**
Principle 3: **Communication**
Principle 4: **Support for learning**
Principle 5: **Community matters**
Principle 6: **Raising and realising aspiration**
Principle 7: **Addressing the barriers to parental engagement**

Principle 1:

A whole school approach

Parent carer engagement should not be periphery to the school improvement plan but part of a more holistic and sustained model. Many case studies of schools with exceptionally good engagement show that strong leadership is the single most important ingredient. Best practice is where schools have a parent carer engagement policy and practices in their own right which are directly linked to the teaching and learning policy.



Key criteria

1 / **Lead and embed**

Lead and embed a whole-school approach to parent carer engagement reflected in the ethos and vision of the setting and a commitment to developing staff capacity through professional development.

2 / **School improvement plan**

The school improvement plan identifies priority areas in which parent carers and the wider community can become involved to raise aspirations and attainment for all children and young people. This is communicated as a priority for the school to governors, school staff, families and other stakeholders.

3 / **An engagement policy**

Develop a policy for parent carer engagement and ensure that it is embedded across all aspects of teaching and learning. The policy links to other relevant associated policies including, but not exclusively, those for homework, uniform or social activities. Parent carers are involved in co-developing and reviewing the education setting's policies and procedures which relate to parent carer engagement.

4 / **Understanding the needs**

The education setting understands the needs of parent carers and the local community and develops ways of working which are supportive and inclusive. They ensure that parent carers are supported to be fully involved in the life and learning of their child.

5 / **A differentiated approach**

Develop a differentiated approach to parent carer engagement and to have a strategy for how they engage and work with families with more complex needs based on a universal, targeted and specialist approach.



All schools should ensure:

The school's approach to parent/carer engagement is clearly set out in the school improvement plan (SIP). They have at least one member of staff who leads and supports the implementation of the whole-school approach – ideally this would be a named member of the senior leadership team, however some schools have found it useful to have, in addition, a non-teaching member of staff in this role.

The school conducts a biennial audit of the effectiveness of current parent carer engagement practice in order to stimulate reflection and planning for further work.

The school has taken steps to raise the awareness of the agenda among staff, for example by running an INSET day or including parent carer engagement as a standing item on the agenda at meetings. Opportunities for training and ongoing professional development to support the delivery of effective parent carer engagement are regularly sought out. Steps have been taken to support capacity for engagement, e.g. through regular safeguarding training, professional learning around how to handle difficult conversations, and school-to-school professional learning opportunities.

All schools should have at least one member of staff who leads and supports the implementation of the whole-school approach

Early Years

'Positive relationships': this is one of the overarching principles of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and therefore a statutory requirement.

This means the school prioritises a positive and respectful culture in its partnerships with parents, which is integral to all aspects of foundation stage provision.

In successful schools

Parent carer engagement is embedded in the school ethos and families are seen as partners in their child's education. Leaders believe strongly that efforts put into working with families and forging community partnerships can have positive outcomes. They communicate this to their stakeholders and adopt a whole-school approach in order to achieve this. Parent carer engagement is championed in every aspect of school life.

Engagement is considered a priority area in order to raise aspirations and standards for all. The school has mapped out its self-improvement journey. All seven principles and the corresponding criteria of Cornwall's parent carer engagement framework are integral to the school's way of working.

As part of its self-evaluation processes and development of the SIP, the school systematically audits current parent carer engagement strategy and practice and evaluates the impact of its activities. The school builds its capacity through staff training and professional learning opportunities in the school and local community or through school-to-school support.

The school has consulted on parent carer engagement goals which are then clearly set out as a priority in the SIP, together with associated targets. Engagement aims to help families to actively support their child's learning, and there is a particular focus on reaching the families of those children who are underperforming or those who have challenging circumstances.



Many staff have engagement activities clearly defined as part of their role and are provided with appropriate support and training. They have associated performance targets that are aligned to the SIP's priority for parent career engagement and are linked to improved outcomes for learners (e.g. around attendance or engaging with particular groups of families).

A development needs analysis is completed for all staff (including non-teaching staff) undertaking parent carer activities and appropriate learning opportunities are put in place, making use of school-to-school learning opportunities and INSET days to meet these needs. Staff are provided with support networks or supervision. Training or development opportunities are also offered to governors and members of parent carer groups.

Efforts are made to ensure that families have a consistent and approachable point of contact, who has the relevant skills and expertise to provide appropriate support. This is often the child's class teacher, but in some cases, this may be a family engagement/liaison officer/pastoral support worker.

Training or development opportunities are also offered to governors and members of parent/carer groups

Early Years

Working in partnership with parents and/or carers is central to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Consulting with parents about children's early experiences helps practitioners plan for effective learning and helps them support parents in continuing their children's learning development at home.



Principle 2:

A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach

Welcoming families to engage with the school and fostering the development of mutual trust and respect between school and families, is the foundation from which the school can then go on to help families to actively support their child's learning.



Key criteria

1 / **Welcoming environment**

The school buildings and environment are welcoming, safe, and appropriate for learning and engagement.

2 / **Friendly reception**

Parent carers can rely on a warm and friendly reception whenever they telephone or visit the school. Steps are taken to get to know the families, which include at induction and key transition points.

3 / **Mutual respect**

Teachers and parent carers treat each other with mutual respect and where differing views and opinionsarise they are considered and discussed with a view to finding solutions.

4 / **Increase involvement**

Activities, events and initiatives to increase parent carer involvement and support engagement with their child's learning, are a regular part of the school's calendar.

5 / **Best for the children**

Settings act on the principle that all parent carers want the best for their children. No parent carers as unreachable.





All schools should ensure:

The school is a welcoming and takes steps to get to know families on an individual basis.

A range of communication methods are used that are appropriate to families' needs and preferences. These will go beyond newsletters and consultation evenings and should make use of day to day opportunities including informal conversations at the school gate, at school social events, or via appropriate communication platforms

The setting makes extra efforts around transition phases to engage with all families.

The school make particular efforts to engage with some groups of families, such as the families of learners that are underperforming, those eligible for free school meals (FSM), or those with additional learning needs (ALN).

They provide accessible routes through which parent carers can express their views and be consulted on specific issues.

All schools should have at least one member of staff who leads and supports the implementation of the whole-school approach



Early Years

The first contact parent carers have with practitioners sets the tone for all future contact.

Parent carers feel valued by the school when:

- They always get a warm and genuine greeting.
- They do not see other parents being treated differently than they are.
- Staff pronounce parent carers and children's names correctly.
- Staff are flexible and able to cope professionally when responding to complex family needs.
- Resources and displays represent the ethnic, cultural and social diversity in society.
- Children can see their own family background and culture represented as well as those of others.

In successful schools

The school is a welcoming place with space for parent carers and clear indications that they are welcome and valued. Steps are taken to develop staff skills to ensure that they work well with all parent carers. Teachers engage with parent carers in a variety of ways on a day-to-day basis in order to build positive relationships, making use of new communications technologies to supplement face-to-face contact.

Care and attention is made to the décor and aesthetics of the reception and other public areas throughout the school buildings to make people feel welcomed upon arrival. Clear and culturally diverse signage in place. Where possible there is a dedicated area for children and families key contact meetings.

The school regards parent carers as equal partners in their children's education and are asked about what is important to them, and what they would like to see happening. The Parent Teacher Association/ Parent Council or other group is empowered and supported to widen its scope. It plays an important role in engagement and in providing a communication channel through which parents carers can be consulted and their voices can be heard and acted on.

The school understands the barriers to engagement and the needs of particular families. The school also identifies ways to meet these needs through early help and the use of specific external agencies that provide targeted support. It has developed ways of working that are supportive and inclusive. Wider family members are welcomed (grandparents, older siblings), and translation, transport or childcare may be provided to support engagement.

The school recognises the reluctance of some parent carers resulting from their own bad experiences at school and provides positive ways for them to be involved at a level they are comfortable with. Learners play a role in encouraging their parent carers to get involved with the school and help generate ideas about how this could be done.

The school understands that every child and family is unique and provides a safe space that is non-judgemental and respectful, staff actively listen to what parent carers have to say including any concerns and anxieties. When differing viewpoints and opinions occur the school remains committed to working in partnership with parent carers to problem solve and build a trusting relationship to ensure the best outcomes for the child. The school is mindful that meetings can be difficult for parent carers and provides information about advocacy and support services such as Parent Carers Cornwall that can support parent carers to have a voice.

Transition points (between schools, key stages and school years) are enhanced through use of informal 'meet the teacher/meet the family' sessions to develop relationships and sharing of information (with necessary data protection protocols in place). Families are asked for suggestions on how to design events better. Home visits are conducted for some families. Specific arrangements are made to Parents or Carers of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities.

There are regular, inclusive 'get to know' events, other social activity and opportunities for families to volunteer to contribute to the school. Family members are asked directly and personally to participate, and the school matches their skills and enthusiasm to the needs of the school. Volunteers help out at family learning events. Family/ community members often have the opportunity to develop their own skills at the same time (e.g. IT skills)

Parent carers are regularly consulted, their voices are heard, and they trust the school to handle complaints well.

Early Years

Well-qualified early years practitioners have expert, wide-ranging knowledge about children's development and learning. Parent carers have in-depth knowledge of their own children. Both parties must come together to form a strong, co-operative and respectful partnership. A co-operative partnership can support children to become confident and curious, supporting their developing mental health and feelings of security. That will help children to thrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and beyond.

Practitioners are friendly professionals with a genuine interest in the children; parents come to like and trust them, and mutual respect can flourish.

Practitioners show welcoming attitudes and show parents that they:

- really like their child and know them well;
- listen, and don't just tell them what to do;
- care about the parent carer as well as the child;
- give the parent carer time to talk;
- smile and have a sense of humour;
- help their child learn;
- keep them informed.



Principle 3:
Communication

Every setting needs to have clear lines of communication established which are tailored to the needs of their wider community and form the basis of a two-way relationship between the school and its families. Effective communications are clear, timely and handled with both professionalism and consideration. In the most successful settings, the communications strategy will have a measurable impact on behaviour and the reduction of exclusions. Parent carers know that their opinions and needs are taken seriously, and that they can communicate with the setting confident that they will be listened to, responded to appropriately and supported to a conclusion which satisfies both parties.



Key criteria

1 / Ethos and values

The school ethos and values reflect the importance of parent carer engagement and establishes a foundation for parent/carer engagement in their child's learning journey.

The setting has a friendly, welcoming environment for parent carers. The school welcome parent carers to participate in and contribute to their child's learning.

2 / Clear communication

The setting should establish clear communication channels between parent carers and school staff. These communications should be two-way - school-to-home and home-to-school (cf. one-way communications e.g. newsletters, text alerts etc.). Parent carers know by name who they can approach with questions or concerns. These are responded to swiftly, professionally and with courtesy. Equally questions/concerns are welcomed/respected. The complaint process is clear, easily accessible for parent carers and adhered to by the school.

3 / Routines and practices

The setting should establish routines and practices which maintain good communication with parent carers, including (but not exclusively) regular timetabled opportunities to speak with class teachers (or SENDco where appropriate); regular timetabled opportunities to engage with their child's learning (open afternoons, assemblies, presentations); confidential advice/training in specific areas of their child's learning e.g. phonics; behavioural strategies; careers/work experience; exam choice.

The setting creates opportunities for parent carers to share important aspects of their culture, needs, experiences and expectations.

4 / Two way communication

The setting maintains a high standard of two-way communication with parent carers through an understanding of their individual needs/ circumstances. Including (but not exclusively), scheduling meetings and activities to match varying parent carer schedules; providing incentives to encourage attendance at-school meetings and events; providing alternative ways to access information and communicate with school staff, aside from attending meetings and activities on school grounds; provide opportunities for parent carers to get to know about the school and school staff in nonthreatening ways.

5 / Culture of excellence

The setting embeds a culture of excellence in its communications with parent carers through the implementation of programs that are culturally sensitive and that reflect the social and environmental aspects of a community influenced by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, locale (rural, suburban, urban), and culture; providing translation services for non-English-speaking parent carers; making every effort to reduce barriers to understanding information e.g. removing jargon and providing CPD opportunities for school staff that focus on strengthening parent engagement.



All schools should ensure:

The school mission statement reflects the importance of parent carer engagement and establishes a foundation for parent carer engagement in the wider experience of the setting. The setting has a well-planned program for parent carer engagement. Policies and procedures are in place to maximize parent/carer engagement in the setting's activities, services, and programs.

The school mission statement reflects the importance of parent carer engagement



Early Years

'Sharing key information with parents': The statutory framework for the EYFS sets out three specific reporting requirements to ensure that parent carers are well-informed:

1. Throughout the EYFS: at any time, if practitioners are concerned about a child's progress in any of the prime areas, they should discuss this with the child's parents/carers.
2. Progress check at age two: Practitioners must undertake the progress check at age two for children on roll, aged between two and three.
3. EYFS Profile: In the final term of the reception year, settings must complete the EYFS Profile for each child. The Profile should provide parents, practitioners and teachers with:
   - a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities
   - their attainment against expected levels
   - information about the child's readiness for Year 1

The following information must be made available to parent carers:

- how the EYFS is being delivered in the setting, and how parents and/or carers can access more information
- the range and type of activities and experiences provided for children, the daily routines of the setting, and how parents and carers can share learning at home
- how the setting supports children with special educational needs and disabilities.

In successful schools

The school has effectively engaged with all parent carers and these channels of communication are freely and successfully employed in two-way conversations (school-parent carer; parent-carer-school). The success of these communications is reflected in the healthy relationships which the setting enjoys with all groups in the wider community. Parent carers feel confident and safe to approach the setting, even with sensitive issues; and parent carers understand that their opinions/needs are respected and valued. Parent carer voice will confirm the strengths of the most inclusive settings.



Early Years

Parent carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners address any learning and development needs in partnership with parent carers, and any relevant professionals. Assessment informs ongoing dialogue between practitioners and year 1 teachers about each child's learning and development, to support a successful transition to key stage 1.



Principle 4:

Support for learning



School-based family and parent carer support activities, with a grounding in more structured, evidence-based programmes produce positive outcomes for learners. Settings can get the most out of family engagement with learning when they clearly focus on working with parent carers as partners in their child's learning. Settings must ensure there is a common understanding of both school demands and family needs, as well as how the nature of support for learning changes as the child gets older. When support for learning takes place, it is essential that positive outcomes are shared and celebrated.

Key criteria

1 / Supporting children

There are three main ways parent carers can get involved in supporting children and young people's learning: These are:

Learning at home: Settings acknowledge that parent carers are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home, in the community and at school.

Home/School partnership: Settings are open to the involvement of parent carers in the work they do and considers ways of providing information that helps them engage with school and their children's education.

Parental representation: Where appropriate, parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy matters affecting the education of their children. This may include parent carer forums, representation on governing bodies, etc. where representatives of the community are enabled to positively represent their group, working proactively and reactively to meet need.

2 / Two-way conversations

Effective two-way conversations ensure that the setting has a good understanding of what parent carers want and need for a successful partnership working to be established. This is particularly important for parent carers of children with SEND and/or barriers to learning.

3 / Support and guidance

Settings ensure that parent carers understand that the level and type of support for learning changes as the learner matures. Schools provide support and guidance to parent carers to understand these changes and how to deliver the most effective support for learning depending on the age, maturity and needs of the learner.

4 / Learning and development

Parent carer engagement supports all aspects of the child's learning and development including academic achievement; positive behaviour; safety; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

Settings provide "toolkits" to guide parents and provide resources around the most effective ways to support children and young people to learn, dependent on their age, maturity and learning needs.

5 / A Child's progress

The setting takes care to ensure that parent carers understand the progress their child is making, and how this assessed. They regularly discuss actions that the school and parent carers will take to support progress.

6 / Lifelong learning

Settings promote "lifelong learning" and provide opportunities for parent carers to build their own knowledge, skills and understanding of key concepts within subject disciplines and how children learn.

Formats will differ, but this may include providing collaborative learning experiences where parent carers are given the opportunity to learn alongside their child (family learning); providing support through the sharing of subject policies (e.g. calculation policies in maths); generic guidance and resources (e.g. how to best support reading comprehension or to learn spellings) subject specific "refresher" workshops (e.g. to boost literacy, numeracy or digital skills); or collaboration with/ signposting to adult learning providers.

7 / Celebration of success

Parent carers are enabled to join in the celebration of success in learning, e.g. through open days and sharing assemblies.

All schools should ensure:

Parent carer evenings are used to help families provide support for learning as well to provide quality feedback on the learner's progress in a way that parent carers can understand.

Advantage is taken of opportunities to communicate to families the most effective ways in which they can support their child's learning, and support them to act on this, e.g. designing homework tasks that learners work on with their families or promote family conversations.

All settings should ensure provision of additional activities to foster engagement with learning among families. The nature and frequency of these activities will depend on the needs of the individual child.

Support parent carers to create the best possible environment for home learning. This may involve, for example, supporting parents to create a regular routine and encourage good homework habits, encouraging their children to set goals, plan, and manage their time, effort, and emotions. This type of support can help children to regulate their own learning and will often be more valuable than direct help with homework tasks.

Support parent carers to create the best possible environment for home learning

Early Years

It is important for settings to promote opportunities for learning that occur in the home. It is vital for early years practitioners to work positively with parent carers to help them understand the impact that playing, having conversations and reading with their children every day have on their child's success and enjoyment of learning.



In successful schools

Families are given guidance and encouragement on the ways in which they can support learning and are given open channels to feedback information on the support that they want and need. Families and staff tackle areas of difficulty and concern together.

Activities are identified which may facilitate learning for family members (such as basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills) and in these cases adults are motivated to continue their own learning. Interventions are evaluated.

Online accounts allow every child to access learning materials at home and training is provided to parent carers to engage with these materials.

Families and staff tackle areas of difficulty and concern together.

Early Years

Children who have rich learning experiences regularly at home will typically go on to achieve better in school. They will be more likely to regulate their behaviour and show more signs of emotional wellbeing. The home activities which have the strongest impact are those in the area of language, literacy and numeracy. These include conversations, pretend play and shared enjoyment of books, songs and nursery rhymes.



Principle 5:

Community matters

Effective settings provide parent carers with a supportive learning and education community in which to thrive and grow. The school should aspire to provide parent carers with a sense of belonging to a shared set of community values, interests and attitudes.



Key criteria

1 / Wider school community

As part of a child's enrolment, the setting should also use this is an opportunity to invite parent carers in the wider school community.

2 / Ambassador

The setting may consider a parent carer ambassador to foster and facilitate the sense of community.

3 / Tailored support

The setting maintains a network of professionals that provide tailored support. All staff are confident in this multi-agency offer and can share this with families and referrals are made appropriately.

4 / Community based events

The setting encourages community-based events and activities in a variety of formats held both onsite and offsite the school/college areas.

5 / Shared educational experiences

Parent carers are encouraged to take part in shared educational experiences with their child. They are supported to help them feel more confident to mentor and coach their children and are provided with educational opportunities for themselves.



All schools should ensure:

All staff will able to confidently define and describe the community matters principle. All information on resources, activities and events will be easily disseminated and accessible.



Early Years

Professional community:

Where there are concerns about a child's learning and development, the school liaises with parent carers to involve them in planning support approaches and where appropriate in partnership with external professionals and support services.

Local community:

The school should provide opportunities for the children to build up a sense of community from a young age, to learn about who they are, where they fit in within their community, and to begin to understand the value of having local services to build their sense of community.

In successful schools

There will be an ethos that when a parent carer and child enrol at the school, they are part of a safe community that is inclusive and responsive to their needs. Families with additional needs are working cohesively with multi-agency organisations enabling impact and change. There maybe be an established parent ambassador scheme for peer to peer support and advocacy. The parent scheme can support community-based engagement and activities and develop and build a trusting community from the outset. There will be support mechanisms for parent carers to receive mentoring and support to enable them to help their child to develop, and also providing the parents with information and support for their own educational development.



Early Years

Professional community:

Practitioners are expected to engage with parent carers of all children in the school. It is important that all practitioners make time for effective two-way communication with parent carers. Settings promote parental involvement in the decision-making process for children with SEND and provide the information and support necessary for them to do so. Where a child requires specialist support, the school should link with and help families to access relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

Local community:

The school celebrates and values cultural, religious and community events and experiences. Practitioners create opportunities to enrich the curriculum by using the local environment to give an exciting context for first-hand experiences for the children.

Principle 6:

Raising and realising aspiration



This principle enables you to address the relevance and power of widening, raising and realising aspirations for children and young people's future life chances. Settings can tap into parental desire to raise happy and successful children by making links between what they are learning now and how this will help them to access and navigate future opportunities. Children/young people's aspirations are the things they hope to achieve for themselves in future, including skills, hobbies and interests in addition to any career goals.

Key criteria

1 / Broaden horizons

'They can't be what they can't see.' Settings show children/young people and families a wide range of possible careers. Real life interactions with role models from the world of work inspire pupils and parent carers helping them revise biases and stereotypes.

2 / Link learning to real life

Staff make links between children's learning and the skills needed in working life. Visiting employers share how they use essential skills, so children/ young people and parent carers appreciate the relevance of the curriculum and feel positive about school/college.

3 / Show all options and pathways

Settings recognise that parent carers' own educational and work experiences influence their expectations and recommendations for their children. Apprenticeships and technical education routes are highlighted in equity with academic pathways. Settings present a realistic picture of the local context regarding options, qualifications, and the labour market, signposting relevant sources of help. Parents feel more confident and equipped to have supportive and meaningful conversations with their children about their future.

4 / Tailored support

Settings understand that some children will face more challenges in building a successful working life than others. Activities are planned and delivered strategically to provide more intensive and sustained support where it is most needed. Appropriate role models reflect a diverse world. Programmes are sensitive to the fact that not all students may find paid work in the future and develop methods to build young people's sense of fulfilment and purpose.

5 / Use key moments

Settings maximise opportunities presented by established events, trips, and projects to increase parental engagement, trust, and confidence. They share aspirations insights during parent carer evenings, options/work experience meetings, careers, and transition events. Mixed methods of delivery ensure shared careers related experiences for all parent carers and their children are accessible and promote learning together.



All schools should ensure:

A clear vision for raising and realising aspiration is communicated to parent carers. Children/young people are shown a wide range of jobs through interactions with relatable role models. Links between school subjects, skills and the world of work are made explicit to young people and parent carers.

Children/young people take part in projects or events that support career aspirations and in secondary schools and colleges visit a workplace. Resources are available to support staff in developing and communicating an understanding of the labour market and the options and pathways available to children/young people and parent carers.



Early Years

School readiness: Practitioners and parent carers work co-operatively to best support the child through transition. They also ensure that the school is prepared for the child. School readiness is about the skills and competencies the children have. It is also about their capacity, with support, to manage the transition into school. An effective focus on school readiness means that children are well prepared and ready to tackle the challenges they will face in the next phase of their education.

In successful schools

Parent carers are consulted on the strategy for raising and realising aspiration and their feedback is used to review practice and implement changes. There is an established parent and/or governor network invested in broadening access to a diverse range world of work experiences and encounters for children/young people and their parent carers.

Aspirations and skills development is embedded in the curriculum and made explicit to children/young people and parent carers. Staff are supported in understanding key labour market trends through regular professional development. Up-to-date knowledge of industry priorities for the future workforce are communicated effectively to parent carers in strategic activities driven by senior leadership.

Aspirations and skills development is embedded in the curriculum and made explicit to children/ young people and parent carers.

Early Years

School readiness: The school makes every effort to ensure that children get off to the best possible start. UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) suggests that the three dimensions of school readiness are:

1. Ready children, focusing on children's learning and development.
2. Ready schools, focusing on the school environment along with practices that foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children.
3. Ready families, focusing on parental attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning and development and transition to school.

Principle 7:

Addressing the barriers to parental engagement

Settings will be able to identify and implement strategies to support diverse and inclusive ways to bridge complex barriers.



Key criteria

1 / Understanding barriers

Schools/colleges should have a clear process and evaluation in place to understand barriers to parent carer engagement. Through the evaluation process, they ascertain the personal experiences of the parent carers and build on the positive and address any negative experiences. The evaluation process will provide an evidenced-based approach to engagement.

2 / Training and support

Teachers should be supported with appropriate training and support to enable them to better understand the needs of parent carers. Staff should develop a relationship with the parent/family at enrolment.

3 / Welcoming environment

The buildings and environment should be made welcoming, safe, and appropriate for learning and engagement. Parent carers and children/young people should participate in a consultation in this process.

4 / Pastoral and educational support

Pastoral and educational support is made available to all parent carers. The level of support to be offered should be clearly outlined and communicated from the child's enrolment.

5 / Career development

There should be an emphasis on career development and learning for students and parents.



All schools should ensure:

There is a written policy that is provided at enrolment and parent carers are informed where to find more information should they need it. Through evaluation, the schools are preventing disengagement of parents by implementing all seven principles within the toolkit. Parent carers are encouraged to take part in school events and activities.

The school demonstrates a pro-active approach to working with parents/carers and remains committed to developing this further through the use of CPD and work with other agencies in order to overcome potential barriers to engagement. There is an open method of communication to be able to find resolutions to any given challenge.

Early Years

Parent carers can influence their children's experience of school transitions. Pupils whose parent carers have concerns regarding school transitions are more likely to have a difficult school transition themselves.

It is important that the school recognises that every family is unique. Practitioners should get to get to know every child and their family, value them, and understand them.

Parent carers may face significant barriers which make it hard for them to focus on home learning with their child. It is important for schools to know about those barriers, and be positive, sympathetic, and encouraging as parents make small changes.

Those barriers might include:

- Time and energy (for example, parents not having time and energy due to work outside the home, household chores and/or caring for other children).
- Knowledge, emotions and confidence (for example, parents being worried about not doing things right, or lacking confidence in their own reading and writing).
- Perceptions of responsibility (for example, parents thinking it's the school's job to provide education and learning activities).
- Language barriers, for example for families with English as an Additional Language.

In successful schools:

Parent carers feel supported and the overwhelming majority are engaged. There will be a comprehensive level of support available. For example, 'literacy and homework lessons' , 'how to support your child' sessions, 'my personal next steps' (i.e. employment support).

All parent carers provide positive feedback and are in attendance at key events throughout the year i.e. student achievement activities and events or key transition events. The school premises will be a welcoming environment.

Parent carers should be given the opportunity to develop a relationship with more than one member of staff at the school and given various methods of communication with flexible timings for meetings.

The school carries out evaluation annually utilising resources outlined in the toolkit. Evaluation should inform a written policy dedicated to parental engagement.

Parent carers should be given the opportunity to develop a relationship with more than one member of staff at the school



Early Years

Successful settings s work with parent carers before, during and after school transitions. The anxiety and stress experienced by some parent carers during key school transitions, can be minimised through effective interventions and strategies.

Familiarisation sessions, open days and orientation sessions enable parents and carers to meet each other and familiarise themselves with the school environment, admissions process and new expectations. These need to be flexible – for example, offered before or after the working day – to accommodate working parents and large families.

Schools that offer bespoke forms of support groups, such as literacy classes and parenting skill support, are also more likely to engage parents and carers from certain ethnic and social groups with school and their children's learning.

Other important characteristics of quality include the practices schools use to bridge the cultural divide between home and school cultures (Shore 1998). This divide is the greatest for children whose first language is not the same as the language of instruction at the school.

Section 5

The Toolkit

Resources to support the achievement of each principle

Principle 1: **A whole school approach**
Principle 2: **A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach**
Principle 3: **Communications**
Principle 4: **Support for learning**
Principle 5: **Community matters**
Principle 6: **Raising and realising aspiration**
Principle 7: **Addressing the barriers to parental engagement**

Resources

Principle 1: A whole school approach

- **Audit tool overview**
- **Audit tool**
- **A Policy for parent carer engagement**
- **Example primary school parent carer partnership policy**
- **Example secondary school parent carer partnership policy**
- **Governance overview**
- **Evaluation**



Audit tool overview

Resource

Audit tool. Schools should use the descriptors for all schools should…. and successful schools have… from the main guidance document to help them to decide on their current progress. The toolkit contains practical resources that schools can use to help them to develop the areas under each indicator.

Purpose

To support your reflection and evaluation of how successful you are currently in meeting the principles and criteria of Cornwall's Parent/Carer engagement framework. This will help you to identify your priorities in terms of Parent/Carer engagement and should be an integral part of the school's annual cycle of improvement.

Who will be involved?

School leaders, governors and where appropriate parent/carers and other stakeholders.

Step 1

Working through the template consider where you are now in relation to the principles and criteria. For each indicator, identify the place on the 0–4 scale that best reflects your current position (or alternatively mark as not applicable).

0 = No activity: This intervention is not being considered by the school.

1 = Initiation phase: The school is aware of this intervention but has not started planning for implementation.

2 = Planning phase: The school is engaged in a planning process to agree upon the steps necessary to move forward.

3 = Implementation phase: The school has completed planning and is in the process of implementing strategies.

4 = Maintenance phase: Strategies have been fully implemented. The school is managing for sustainability and further enhancement of this indicator.

Step 2

Thinking about your current activity for each indicator, consider the evidence you have on whether the activity is having an impact/making a difference. Score each indicator as either '?' (impact unknown) or on a scale of -3 (highly negative impact) to +3 (high positive impact).

Step 3

Come to agreement on whether new/different activity is a priority for action for the school for the next planning period (high, medium, low).

You may want to consider the following.

- Is this issue currently presenting a barrier to engagement with the school/engagement with learning?
- What difference would taking action on this indicator make to learners, parents/carers and the school?
- Could taking action in this area help the school to deliver on its other priorities?
- Where would action sit on the school's spectrum of competing priorities?
- What resources/capacity building would be required in order to take action? Are these realistically available?

Step 4

Reflect more generally on the picture that is developing – what are the areas of strength? What are the gaps?

Are there more strategic activities that are needed in order to develop weak areas, for instance through school-to-school continuous professional development (CPD)? Staff capacity building?

Step 5

Use the evaluation process to inform the annual school improvement plan.

Adapted from the Welsh Governments, Family and community engagement toolkit (2016)





Audit tool
Principle 1: **A whole school approach**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Lead and embed Lead and embed a whole-school approach to parent/carer engagement reflected in the ethos and vision together with developing staff capacity through professional development.					
School improvement plan The school improvement plan identifies priority areas in which parents and the wider community can become involved to raise aspirations and attainment for all children and young people. This is communicated as a priority for the school to governors, school staff, families and other stakeholders.					
Parent/carer engagement Develop a policy for parent/carer engagement and ensure that it is embedded in learning and teaching as well as policies for homework, uniform or social activities. Parents are involved in co-developing and reviewing education settings policies and procedures.					
Understanding the needs The education setting understands the needs of parents, the local community and develops ways of working which are supportive and inclusive. They ensure that parents are supported to be fully involved in the life and work of their children's learning.					
A differentiated approach Develop a differentiated approach to parent/carer engagement and to have a strategy for how they engage and work with families with more complex needs based on a universal, targeted and specialist approach.					

Audit tool
Principle 2: **A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Welcoming environment The school buildings and environment are welcoming, safe, and appropriate for learning and engagement.					
Friendly reception Parent carers can rely on a warm and friendly reception whenever they telephone or visit the school. Steps are taken to get to know the families, which include at induction and key transition points.					
Mutual respect Teachers and parent carers treat each other with mutual respect and where differing views and opinions arise, they are considered and discussed with a view to finding solutions.					
Increase involvement Activities, events and initiatives to increase parent carer involvement and support engagement with their child's learning, are a regular part of the school's calendar.					
Best for the children Settings act on the principle that all parent carers want the best for their children. No parent carers considered unreachable.					

Audit tool
Principle 3: **Communication attitudes and approach**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Ethos and values The school ethos and values reflect the importance of parent carer engagement in their child's learning journey. The setting has a friendly, welcoming environment for parent carers. The school welcomes parent carers to participate in and contribute to their child's learning.					
Clear communication The setting should establish clear communication channels between parent carers and school staff. These communications should be two-way - school-to-home and home-to-school (cf. one-way communications e.g. newsletters, text alerts etc.). Parent carers know by name who they can approach with questions or concerns. These are responded to swiftly, professionally and with courtesy. Equally questions/concerns are welcomed/ respected. The complaint process is clear, easily accessible for parent carers and adhered to by the school.					
Routines and practices The setting should establish routines and practices which maintain good communication with parent carers, including (but not exclusively) regular timetabled opportunities to speak with class teachers (or SENDco where appropriate); regular timetabled opportunities to engage with their child's learning (open afternoons, assemblies, presentations); confidential advice/training in specific areas of their child's learning e.g. phonics; behavioural strategies; careers/work experience; exam choice. The setting creates opportunities for parent carers to share important aspects of their culture, needs, experiences and expectations.					

Audit tool

Principle 3: **Communication attitudes and approach** (continued)

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Two way communication The setting maintains a high standard of two-way communication with parent carers through an understanding of their individual needs/circumstances. This includes (but not exclusively), scheduling meetings and activities to match varying parent carer schedules; providing incentives to encourage attendance at school meetings and events; providing alternative ways to access information and communicate with school staff, aside from attending meetings and activities on school grounds; provide opportunities for parent carers to get to know about the school and school staff in non-threatening ways.					
Culture of excellence The setting embeds a culture of excellence in its communications with parent carers through the implementation of programs that are culturally sensitive and that reflect the social and environmental aspects of a community influenced by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, local (rural, suburban, urban), and culture; providing translation services for non-English-speaking parent carers; making every effort to reduce barriers to understanding information e.g. removing jargon and providing CPD opportunities for school staff that focus on strengthening parent carer engagement.					

Audit tool
Principle 4: **Support for learning**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Supporting children There are three main ways parent carers can get involved in supporting children and young people's learning: These are: Learning at home: Settings acknowledge that parent carers are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home, in the community and at school. Home/School partnership: Settings are open to the involvement of parent carers in the work they do and considers ways of providing information that helps them engage with school and their children's education. Parental representation: Where appropriate, parent carers have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy matters affecting the education of their children. This may include parent carer forums, representation on governing bodies, etc. where representatives of the community are enabled to positively represent their group, working proactively and reactively to meet need.					
Two-way conversations Effective two-way conversations ensure that the setting has a good understanding of what parent carers want and need for a successful partnership working to be established. This is particularly important for parent carers of children with SEND and/or barriers to learning.					
Support and guidance Settings ensure that parent carers understand that the level and type of support for learning changes as the learner matures. Schools provide support and guidance to parent carers to understand these changes and how to deliver the most effective support for learning depending on the age, maturity and needs of the learner.					

Audit tool

Principle 4: **Support for learning** (continued)

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Learning and development Supports all aspects of the child's learning and development including academic achievement; positive behaviour; safety; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). Settings provide "toolkits" to guide parent carers and provide resources around the most effective ways to support children and young people to learn, dependent on their age, maturity and learning needs.					
A child's progress The setting takes care to ensure that parent carers understand the progress their child is making, and how this is assessed. They regularly discuss actions that the school and parent carers will take to support progress.					
Lifelong learning Settings promote "lifelong learning" and provide opportunities for parent carers to build their own knowledge, skills and understanding of key concepts within subject disciplines and how children learn. Formats will differ, but this may include providing collaborative learning experiences where parent carers are given the opportunity to learn alongside their child (family learning); providing support through the sharing of subject policies (e.g. calculation policies in maths); generic guidance and resources (e.g. how to best support reading comprehension or to learn spellings) subject specific "refresher" workshops (e.g. to boost literacy, numeracy or digital skills); or collaboration with/signposting to adult learning providers					
Celebration of success Parent carers are enabled to join in the celebration of success in learning, e.g. through open days and sharing assemblies.					

Audit tool
Principle 5: **Community matters**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Wider school community Settings should also use a child's enrolment as an opportunity to invite parent carers into the wider school community.					
Ambassador The setting may want to consider a parent carer ambassador to foster and facilitate the sense of community.					
Tailored support The setting maintains a network of professionals that provide tailored support. All staff are confident in this multi-agency offer and can share this with families. Referrals are made appropriately.					
Community based events The setting encourages community-based events and activities in a variety of formats held both onsite and offsite.					
Shared educational experiences Parent carers are encouraged to take part in shared educational experiences with their child. They are supported to help them feel more confident to mentor and coach their children and are provided with educational opportunities for themselves.					

Audit tool
Principle 6: **Raising and realising aspirations**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Broaden horizons Settings can broaden horizons by showing children and their families a wide range of possible careers. Language should be carefully chosen with definitions provided for key words and jargon avoided. Real life interactions with working people can be used to inspire pupils and parent carers. Parent carers with different careers may be willing to be volunteers. An alumni network could be developed.					
Aspirations and outcomes Staff make links between aspirations and outcomes for children and include this in their communication with parent carers. Teachers illustrate real life outcomes for the activities, skills, knowledge and behaviours that children learn in the classroom. Research skills, decision-making, communication, managing change and confidence are all valued within the curriculum.					
Options information Settings understand that parent carers' own experiences of education influence their recommendations and expectations for their children. Information about all the post 16 options should be provided to parent carers as well the academic routes. Settings make use of up to date information about the changing labour market and signpost relevant sources in order to support parent carers own career aspirations.					
Tailored support Settings will provide more intensive and sustained support where it is most needed. This will take into account individual pupils and families. Settings recognise that not all students may find paid work in the future and develop methods that build children's sense of fulfilment and purpose through a range of planned and progressive activities and experiences. They work with parent carers to raise and realise the aspirations of all children including those with disabilities and make sure that they are using resources that reflect a diverse world and make use of appropriate role models.					

Audit tool

Principle 6: **Raising and realising aspirations** (continued)

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Shared educational experience Settings design activities to increase parent carer engagement, these may include meetings with employers and the local community; run a 'future me' project, visit a business or university; run a careers conversation workshop for families. Settings use mixed methods of delivery to create a shared careers related experience for parent carers and their children/young people. Settings carry out regular reviews and update work to reflect business thinking and actions, for example a focus on developing digital skills, the environment and green skills or inclusivity.					

Audit tool
Principle 7: **Addressing the barriers to parent carer engagement**

Indicator	Current progress (0–4)	Current impact (-3 to +3)	Priority H	Priority M	Priority L
Understanding barriers Schools/colleges should have a clear process and evaluation in place to understand barriers to parent carer engagement. Through the evaluation process they ascertain the personal experiences of the parent carers, and use this to build on the positive and address any negative experiences. The evaluation process will provide an evidenced-based approach to engagement.					
Training and support Teachers should be supported with appropriate training and support to enable them to better understand the needs of parent carers. Staff should develop a relationship with the family at enrolment.					
Welcoming environment The buildings and environment should be made welcoming, safe, and appropriate for learning and engagement. Parent carers and children/young people should participate in a consultation in this process.					
Pastoral and educational support Pastoral and educational support is made available to all parent carers. The level of support to be offered should be clearly outlined and communicated from the child's enrolment.					
Career development There should be an emphasis on career development and learning for students and parents.					

A policy for parent carer engagement

Resource

Parent carer engagement policy (see examples)

Purpose

Writing a policy for parent carer engagement provides a clear framework for how the school communicates with families and ensure they are fully involved in every aspect of the school community.

Educations settings need policies and procedures in place so that the staff, governors, children and parent carers involved in the school are able to work from the same set of guidelines. These examples of parent carer policies from a primary and secondary settings provide a structure to work, outlining aims, purpose and responsibility.

Who will be involved?

School leader(s), governors, including parent carer representation.

Step 1 Do your research

You will need to pull together information from a range of resources. For example:

- Establish any statutory requirements
- Refer to guidance from the DfE and other regulatory bodies, such as the local authority (LA)
- Consult other members of staff with relevant expertise
- Compare policies from other schools (see examples enclosed)
- Consult with parent carers
- Refer to any policies that relate to the one you're writing - make sure they correspond

Step 2 Write the policy

Adapt the model policies enclosed in the toolkit or use a template from your LA. The person developing the policy will work with other staff members with relevant knowledge to write the first draft. Consult with parent carers before completing the draft. The school business manager or another senior member of staff can then edit the draft.

Step 3 Submit for approval

Submit the policy to the relevant person or body for approval.

If you've updated a policy and changed it significantly, highlight these changes in the draft document so it's easy to compare the old and new versions.

Step 4 Share the policy

Communicate to staff and parents that there's a new or updated policy and what's changed. This can be done in a number of ways including at:

- Training evenings
- INSET days
- Whole-staff briefings
- Meetings of different staff and parent / carer groups
- Website

Step 5 Embed the policy

Make this policy a 'living' documents and which are reviewed regularly and updated to incorporate new best practice, as well as to reflect changes in legislation.

Example primary school Parent carer partnership policy

Statement of intent

1. Aims
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Systems of communication
4. Communicating with new parent carers and pupils
5. Communicating pupil progress and information
6. Communicating school information
7. Providing support
8. Parental feedback
9. Key documents
10. Monitoring and review

Statement of intent

At the example primary school, we aim to develop close relationships with parent carers and families so we can work collaboratively to support the educational progress and wellbeing of our pupils.

For the purpose of this policy, "parent" refers to parents, guardians, carers and any other family adults involved in a child's direct care, education and development.

We know that parent carers and families' interest and involvement in their child's learning is associated with securing positive outcomes and higher achievement for their child. We believe parents are a key influence in their child's life and that education is a collaborative enterprise involving parents, school and pupils. Strong partnerships with parents are pivotal to our school life, and we are committed to establishing and maintaining an effective and purposeful working relationship between home and school.

This policy provides a clear framework for how our school communicates with families, including the ways in which parents can ensure they are fully involved in every aspect of the school community.

Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of governors Date: _____

1: **Aims**

1.1. This policy has been developed with an aim to:

- Help parents support their child's learning and be involved in the life of the school.
- Support pupils to achieve the highest standards through close partnerships between home and school.
- Develop a clear communication strategy to keep parents well-informed of their child's progress, the school community and any other matters relating to their child's overall wellbeing.
- Ensure parents are fully involved in school life and the school community.
- To inform, clarify and communicate the breadth of work between families and the school.
- Operate an open-door policy where parents can engage in regular communication with staff members and voice any concerns.
- Ensure arrangements are in place for parents to provide their feedback.
- Support parents both inside and outside of school by providing useful information.
- Create an inclusive environment that welcomes all parents.

1.2. We aim to be a welcoming school that communicates regularly with parents through:

- Promoting positive dialogue about learning.
- Having an open-door policy for parents to visit the school.
- Ensuring our reception arrangements are welcoming.
- Ensuring all communication is user-friendly, useful and informative.
- Publishing regular informative whole-school newsletters.
- Maintaining and developing our school website and social media accounts.
- Ensuring parents can easily communicate with school by making sure they are fully informed of the channels of communication.

1.3. We aim to help parents enhance their own learning and to be actively involved in school life by encouraging parents to:

- Volunteer to support in school.
- Attend workshops and courses.
- Attend school performances, events and celebrations.
- Become involved in school projects.
- Become school governors.
- Celebrate diversity throughout the school.

1.4. We aim to actively involve parents in the education, progress and wellbeing of their children through:

- Ensuring safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Providing practical strategies to support learning at home.
- Supporting new parents to the school with an induction programme.
- Supporting parents to promote their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Providing information regarding the curriculum.
- Informing parents of their child's learning and progress through reports and consultation meetings.
- Providing guidance for parents to support their child through times of transition, e.g. between years and key stages.
- Celebrating success.
- Making sure all school policies are accessible and easy to understand.

1.5. We aim to establish the views and opinions of parents and act upon these through:

- Establishing clear lines of communication between home and school and recognising the importance of parental voice.
- Providing regular opportunities for parental consultation and informing parents of the results.

2: Roles and responsibilities

2.1. The school is responsible for:

- Establishing effective means of communication with parents.
- Communicating the curriculum clearly to parents.
- Informing parents of all school events within appropriate timelines.
- Regularly keeping parents informed of their child's progress and helping parents to support their child's learning.
- Providing opportunities for parents to communicate with the school regularly to provide their feedback.
- Listening to the views and concerns of parents.

2.2. Parents are responsible for:

- Reading the key communications circulated by the school and responding to/acting on these, e.g. by attending meetings.
- Engaging with verbal communications so that they understand the information being communicated to them.
- Logging on to the school website for detailed information about the school calendar, term dates, exam details, monitoring and assessments, school achievements and other useful downloads.
- Ensuring the school is informed of any important information, such as their child's medical needs or safeguarding information.
- Raising any concerns they may have with the school.
- Engaging in opportunities to provide feedback.



3: Systems of communication

3.1. The school will communicate with parents in the following ways:

- School and class twitter accounts
- Verbal communication
- Letters home
- Text messages
- Newsletters
- Leaflets
- The school website
- Parents' evenings
- Drop-in sessions
- Assemblies and performances
- Email
- Training sessions
- Facebook page
- School information boards
- School diaries/calendars
- Online learning platforms: Tapestry and SeeSaw

3.2. For general enquiries, parents should ring the school office xxx which is open Monday to Friday xx am and xx pm

3.3. For non-urgent enquiries, parents should email the school (insert school email address).

3.4. Parents can also visit the school office regarding enquiries that they might have. Parents will be given a login to online platforms where available at the beginning of the academic year. Teachers can provide advice, support and training in how to use these systems as needed.



4: Communicating with new parents and pupils

4.1. Prospective parents are given a school prospectus pack upon request or from the school reception.

4.2. Prospective parents are welcomed into school and can request tours of the school given by office staff or where requested, a member of the senior leadership team.

4.3. Prospective parents are invited to a new parents meeting via text/email or letter in the Summer term preceding the year of entry to the school.

4.4. Prospective parents are invited to an induction along with their child in the Summer term before the new academic year, where they are given an information pack which contains essential school information and welcomed into the school.

4.5. Parents of new pupils are invited to meet their child's teachers via a 'meet and greet' evening in the early Autumn term to review their child's progress so far and address any concerns.

5: Communicating pupil progress and information

5.1. Parents are invited to attend three parents' evenings per year – one at the end of each term. Parents will meet with their child's teachers and discuss progress.

5.2. Parents are provided with one written academic report in the summer term outlining their child's progress and attendance. Any concerns can be discussed with their child's teacher.

5.3. Parents will be invited to meetings to discuss their child's progress where the teacher deems it necessary, for example, where their child's academic performance falls significantly or there are concerns about attendance.

5.4. One-to-one meetings will be scheduled, as appropriately, for parents to discuss and review any educational plans in place to support their child, such as EHC plans.

5.5. One-to-one meetings can be scheduled by parents with the headteacher, class teacher, SENCO or any other relevant member of staff to discuss areas of concern. Parents wishing to request these meetings should call the school office to request to speak to the relevant member of staff.

5.6. Parents wishing to speak with a pastoral member of staff can do so by contacting the following individuals (xxx).

5.7. Class teachers will be available to discuss pupils' progress and any concerns with parents before the start and end of each school day.

5.8. Pupil progress will be celebrated on the school's social media channels and the school website, where consent has been provided to do so.

5.9. Parents are encouraged to follow and engage with the school's social media channels. Parents engaging with the school's social media channels are expected to adhere to the school's social media code of conduct.

5.10. Pupils' educational achievements will be celebrated through letters home, assemblies, events and presentations throughout the academic year. Parents will be invited to attend all of these events.

5.11. Curriculum information will be provided to parents each term by subject leaders and class teachers in the form of curriculum guides.

6: Communicating school information

6.1. Parents can access the following information from the school website:

- Curriculum resources
- Term dates
- Copies of letters to parents, where appropriate
- Information about lessons/ additional study
- Special events
- Exam or formal assessment schedule
- Newsletters, leaflets and updates
- Emergency contact details
- School policies

6.2. Parents will be kept informed of any important school information, such as key dates and events, via newsletters, emails, text messages and social media.

6.3. Parents will be invited to partake in some volunteer work at school, for example, educational visits (if they have a valid DBS check) and events.

6.4. Class teachers will use social media/online platforms to communicate information, such as homework assignments. Parents are encouraged to use these forums to also communicate with their child's class teacher.

6.5. The Parents section of the school website has information about term dates, uniform, where to get support and help, yearly expectations, admissions, free school lunches, breakfast club and attendance.

7: Providing support

7.1. The school aims to support parents in every way possible to help them with the educational development and wellbeing of their child.

7.2. The school runs various assemblies, training sessions, coffee mornings and opportunities to help parents with issues they and their child may face, such as online safety and mental health, to share experiences and discuss concerns, and ensure they can support their child's learning, well-being and individual needs.

7.3. All parents will be invited to attend these sessions and are provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

7.4. The school also provides various forms of written communication, such as leaflets and guidance, to further support parents.

7.5. Parents are provided with details of external organisations which can offer support, as well as details of any other arrangements in the local area.

7.6. Parents will be provided with support and resources to help them make informed choices about school transitions and will have the opportunity to discuss their child's transition with the class teacher.

7.7. To further support the needs of our community and families, we have employed a Speech and Language Therapist on our school staff, to ensure timely referrals and intervention and take place and remove anxiety from parents/carers.

8: Parental feedback

8.1. The school will consult with parents on various aspects of school life throughout the academic year.

8.2. Questionnaires will be accessible from the school website.

8.3. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback to the school as and when they need to. Feedback can be delivered to office@ncps.co.uk, or meetings can be arranged.

8.4. The school will arrange for regular consultations, such as group meetings, to seek parent feedback.

8.5. All parental feedback is valued, and responses are considered.

9: Key documents

9.1. The school publishes key documents and policies on the school website. Parents can download these documents.

9.2. The school aims to create documents that are accessible to parents and easy to understand.

9.3. If parents wish to see hard copies of policies, they can be requested from the school office.

10: Monitoring and review

10.1. The policy is reviewed annually by the headteacher and the governing board.

10.2. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to parents

10.3. The scheduled review date for this policy is **ADD DATE**



Example secondary school Parent carer partnership policy

Rationale

Partnership with parent carers is key to ensuring that children maximise their potential at school. Research has shown that where parent carers are engaged with the work of the school, they are more likely to understand the importance of education and the part they can play in supporting their child, and consequently s/he is more likely to achieve successful outcomes.

Furthermore, establishing a true partnership with parent carers can only be achieved when a school systematically seeks their views and encourages their active involvement in their child's education.

Our objectives

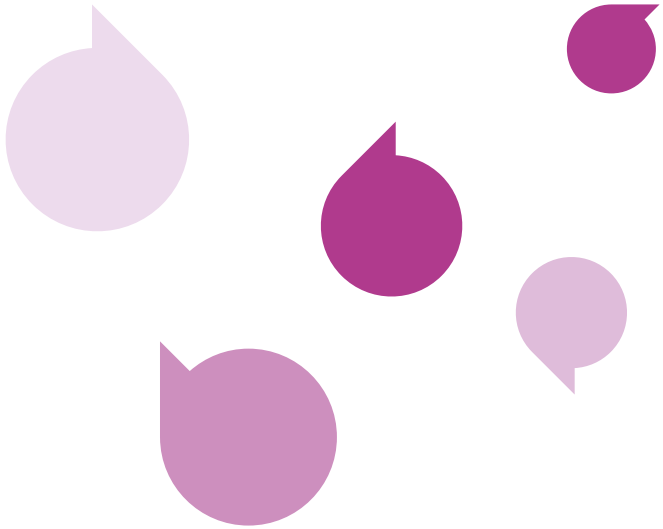
We aim to establish a partnership with parent carers in which:

- we take account of parent carers' views, providing opportunities to contribute to decision-making about whole-school matters.
- we enable parent carers to support, and make decisions about, their own child's learning, well-being and development.
- we maintain good quality, frequent communication with parent carers.

Our principles

Our principles cover seven aspects of parent carer engagement, and make a commitment that parent carers will:

1. **Relationships**
   - be encouraged to build highly positive, productive relationships with the school
2. **Access and response**
   - be given a range of clear, accessible channels for contacting the school with enquiries or concerns, and know that these will be dealt with promptly and efficiently
3. **Communication: progress and development**
   - be kept well informed about their child's achievement, well-being, behaviour and development.
4. **Communication: wholel school matters**
   - receive regular, good quality communication about the work of the school.
5. **Reviewing and target setting**
   - be encouraged to work with the school in reviewing their child's achievements and setting targets for improvement.
6. **Supporting learning**
   - receive guidance on a range of strategies to support their child's learning and personal development
7. **Consultation**
   - be consulted regularly and know that their views will be used to inform decision- making about whole-school matters



Achieving our principles

1. **Relationships**
   - We will invite parent carers to establish a relationship with the school prior to their child starting, through a transition support programme which includes an individual "family interview" for each child.
   - We will invite parent carers to a Personal Tutor afternoon in the autumn term of Year 7, so that a strong relationship can be established between the school and parent carers.
   - We will ensure that, where possible, students retain the same Personal Tutor throughout Years 7-11.
2. **Access and response**
   - We will aim to improve further access arrangements for parent carers with disabilities.
   - We will aim to respond promptly and efficiently to all communication received by telephone, e-mail and letter.
   - We will aim to respond promptly and efficiently to all concerns, in line with our Parental Concerns Policy.
   - We will respond positively to all requests from parent carers to meet with staff, provided that an appointment is pre-booked at a mutually convenient time.
   - We will ensure that a nominated member of staff is available to meet with parent carers at short notice if there is an issue which requires urgent attention.
   - We will hold two "open access" sessions per year, when parent carers may meet with a senior member of staff.
3. **Communication: progress and development**
   - We will report on students' progress three times a year in all year groups.
   - We will invite parent carers to attend an annual parents' evening for their child's year group to discuss his/her progress with subject teachers.
   - We will use the student planner on a lesson-by-lesson basis to indicate where students have been rewarded for good work, effort and attitude, and where there are concerns regarding matters such as behaviour, punctuality, organisation, home learning and uniform.
   - We will provide a termly attendance report for each student.
   - We will contact parent carers by text or voice message as soon as possible if their child is absent from school, where no notification has been received.
   - We will contact parent carers by phone, letter or e-mail where there are particular concerns regarding their child's progress or development.
4. **Communication: wholel school matters**
   - We will keep parent carers informed of whole school matters through a half- termly newsletter.
   - We will publish important information regarding school routines through the student planner.
   - We will seek to maximise use of the school website to provide up to date information on whole school matters.
   - We will celebrate the achievements of our school community through our school magazine published once each year.
   - We will develop further the use of electronic communication to supplement traditional methods of communication.
5. **Reviewing and target setting**
   - We will review targets and teaching strategies for all students on the SEN register, in consultation with parent carers, at least annually.
   - Where appropriate, we will invite parent carers to attend a positive discipline contract meeting to agree personalised contract targets with staff and students.

6. **Supporting learning**
   - We will provide access to "study support" materials for parent carers, including a dedicated area of the school's website.
   - We will hold support and development sessions for parent carers to help them support their child's progress.
   - As part of an Extended Services Cluster we will jointly employ a Parent Support Adviser to provide support for parent carers (subject to continued funding).
   - We will signpost parent carers for swift and easy access to external specialist support services.
7. **Consultation**
   - We will invite parent carers to attend an annual Parent Carer Consultation (PCC) evening with a specific focus.
   - We will consult parent carers when we are considering significant changes to school routines
   - We will conduct a biennial "Parent Carer Voice" survey, to gauge levels of satisfaction with the wider work of the school, and to identify areas for improvement.

Respectful communication

We all want the best for our young people, whether we are parents, carers, teachers or members of the pastoral or admin staff. To help us achieve this, we ask all adults involved in this partnership to have consideration for one another, to respect the roles we each have in looking after the interests of our young people, and:

- to be polite
  - staying calm
  - using respectful language
- to be factual
  - ignoring hearsay and sticking to the facts
  - not jumping to conclusions – working together to find out the truth and establish the full picture
- to be patient
  - taking time to listen to one another
  - giving time for things to be followed up properly – both at school and at home
  - unless it's an emergency, booking meetings in advance so that we can discuss things when we have time to do so properly.

Monitoring the impact

The impact of this policy will be measured through:

- A biennial survey of parent carers on the effectiveness of parent carer engagement, as part of the wider "Parent Carer Voice" survey.
- Surveys undertaken at parents' evenings, focussing on specific aspects of parent carer engagement pertinent to that year group (e.g. supporting transition, options advice, etc.)

In addition, we will monitor other indicators on an ongoing basis, such as:

- Attendance rates at year group parents evenings and parent support / information evenings
- Attendance at Parent Carer Consultation (PCC) Evenings
- The response rate to surveys of parent carers
- An evaluation of where the outcome of parent carer consultation has influenced school decision-making

Equality impact assessment

As a school we also monitor the impact of this and other policies on students, staff, governors and parent carers. We assess whether they could have an adverse impact on particular groups, and whether there is potential for them to have a positive impact in terms of equality of opportunity and outcome.

Governance overview

Resource

Parent carer engagement: A guide for governing boards

https://www.nga.org.uk/getmedia/64b96dac-ba3f-41a7-a4a4-c858330aedb5/NGA-Parentkind-20pp-Guide-%28WEB-Aug-2019%29-AW.pdf

Purpose

This joint guidance from the National Governance Association (NGA) and Parentkind will help governing boards ensure that every school they govern has a parent-friendly culture and will provide them with practical information and ideas to help generate a productive and rewarding two-way dialogue.

Listening and working well with all school stakeholders is a key part of the governing board's role. The participation of parent carers is an important aspect of school governance which provides boards with key insights into their school(s), ensures they demonstrate transparency and better decision-making, and allows them to work in partnership to deliver the best educational outcomes for every pupil.

Who will be involved?

School leader(s), governors, parent carers; trustees

Step 1

*NB the steps below are not designed to be in consecutive order but suggestions as to how you might use the tool.

Use the guide as an informative and reflective tool. Read through section 1 on how can engaging parent carers help to ensure good governance.

Step 2

Identify any gap/ areas for development and build these into strategic planning.

Step 3

Use the resource to provide training for governors.

Evaluation

Evaluation helps schools to continually learn and improve, adjusting their interventions according to what is or is not demonstrably working for their learners. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) states that although it is widely acknowledged through the research that parent career engagement does make a difference to education outcomes there is limited robust evidence on which approaches are the most effective. In discussing the opportunities and challenges of effective parent carer engagement the EEF encourages schools to carefully, plan, monitor and evaluate the interventions to ensure that they have the intended impacts.

This guidance document prompts schools to evaluate the engagement activities that they put in place in order to assess whether they are having the desired impact.

Data collection and monitoring could include the following features of interventions.

1. Children's attainment and learning related outcomes.
2. Children's behavioural and well-being outcomes.
3. Wider outcomes with a focus on the extra -curricular activities.
4. Parents carers' demographic profile.
5. Parental attitudes to education and attendance.
6. Barriers to parent carer engagement.

There are two resources from the EEF that could assist you to plan, monitor and evaluation effective interventions to support impact and sustainability. They are: -

1. The EEF 's Putting evidence to work : A schools guide to implementation (2019) https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/a-schools-guide-to-implementation/ provides schools with an overview of how effective schools manage change well through effective planning and an evidence informed approach. This guide encourages settings to give further depth of thought to how new ideas are introduced, how the changes will be managed and what steps are needed to maximise the chances of success. Too often the who, why, where, when, and how are overlooked meaning implementation risks becoming an 'add on' task expected to be tackled on top of the day-to-day work. As a result, projects initiated with the best of intentions can fade away as schools struggle to manage these competing priorities.
2. The EEF DIY Evaluation Guide www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evaluation/diy-evaluation-guide is a resource for teachers and schools which introduces the key principles of educational evaluation and provides practical advice on designing and carrying out small-scale evaluations in schools. It provides straightforward advice on how to complete the eight steps necessary for a DIY evaluation (see table on following page).





Step	Description
Stage 1: Preparation	
1. Frame your evaluation question	This is the question that your evaluation will set out to answer.
2. Decide your measure	This is what you will use to assess whether an approach has been successful. For example, standardised reading, writing, mathematics or science tests.
3. Decide your comparison group	This is to understand what would have happened to learners if you did not implement the new approach. For example, you could compare with learners in the same or a different class.
Stage 2: Implementation	
4. Conduct a pre-test	This is to understand learners' starting point on the outcome measure or form the groups in matched designs. Learners in your intervention and comparison groups should be starting from the same point.
5. Deliver the Intervention	Deliver the intervention as planned and record exactly what happened. You should ensure that your comparison group does not receive the intervention.
6. Conduct a post-test	This is to understand the impact of the intervention on the outcome measure. The post-test should be implemented at the same time with both the intervention and comparison groups.
Stage 3: Analysis and reporting	
7. Analysis and interpretation	Record the results in a spreadsheet and then calculate the effect on attainment.
8. Report the results	It is important to report the results clearly, e.g. using a PowerPoint presentation.

Adapted from the Welsh Government, Families and community engagement toolkit (2016)

Resources

Principle 2: Welcoming and engaging families, ideas and strategies



- **Welcoming and engaging families overview**
- **Welcoming and engaging parent carers, ideas and strategies**
- **Action planning framework**
- **Welcoming and including families gap analysis**
- **Planning for change**
- **Core values overview**
- **Core values charter**

Welcoming and engaging families, ideas and strategies overview

Resource

Welcoming and engaging families, ideas and strategies

Purpose

This resource provides a range of tried and tested strategies that education settings have successfully employed. It is a useful set of ideas that can be adapted to meet the needs of the local context. It can be used as a professional development tool or as a basis for discussion. The key purpose here is to translate the idea into a strategy for implementation.

Who will be involved?

Staff, parent carers, pupils and community groups

Step 1

Follow the instructions on the resource for use as a tool for staff INSET or discussion within the appropriate group for example the senior leadership team.

Step 2

Select an idea or ideas that will form the basis of a strategy for implementation as part of the school improvement plan.

Step 3

Identify the outcomes, actions and resource implications.

Step 4

Implement and evaluate the strategy. If successful, identify ways in which it can become an integral part of the school's way of working.



Welcoming and engaging parent carers: ideas and strategies

- This tool can be used as part of a CPD workshop or as a discussion trigger.
- It can be cut into separate idea cards.
- Each group is given two or three idea cards.
- The group reads their ideas, then chooses the one they like the most. They can return the others to a central pile, from which other groups may take ideas, if they need to.
- Each group then plans an adaptation of their preferred idea and shows how it might work in their school. They should be specific, indicate resource implications and identify benefits and outcomes.





Correspondence

Have pupils write weekly letters to their parent carers that include descriptions of work completed in their classes for the week. Make sure pupils address their favourite new thing learned, where they need more help, and what they mastered. Have parent carers write back with any comments or follow-up questions they have about the work. If parent carers need a guidance questions to consider, provide them with a few conversation starters.

Family-centred projects

Create special assignments for pupils that require interaction with family members, business owners, and others in the community. For example, in history, have pupils research the differences in work requirements for jobs that existed 30 years ago and a similar position today. In maths, have pupils talk to family and friends who are at college about the costs of college and then have them create a budget to see how much money they will need to attend. In English, have pupils interview family members on a particular topic of their choosing and write it up as it would be published in a magazine or newspaper. Use pupil-teacher-family contracts for long term projects so everyone is aware of their role and responsibility they play in completing the project.

Family conversations

Promote family conversations as an informal way to include parent carer engagement in education. Send a topic home each week (as well as advertise on the web, through email, and at extracurricular events) as a conversation starter for parent carers to discuss with their children. Stress that parent carers are welcome to converse about anything, but that the topic serves as a guide for those who struggle with thinking of topics to engage their children in conversation.

Vocabulary and key words

Produce a school wide vocabulary list of terms common to all subject areas that pupils have struggled with or need to know. Create a brochure inclusive of the terms and their meanings and distribute it to all pupils. Engage parent carers by notifying them of the words, highlighting them on the website, posting them in the front office and around the school, including the list in pupil programs and passing out flyers at athletic events. Provide study tips to families as well and encourage them to use the vocabulary words with their children.

Engagement events

Hold parent carer engagement evenings (Dads and Lads or Family Cooking Evenings), parent carer chats, or parent carer meetings to inform families of the variety of ways they can influence and be a part of their children's education. Present issues that are important to your school community and offer these opportunities at various times and places. Partner with community resources to reach various parent carer populations. Create parent carer huddles during the meeting, after a large presentation or keynote to make a larger school seem smaller and allow parent carers to engage in meaningful conversations with one another around selected topics of interest. Some topics for meetings may include:

- How well do you know your children: effective communication
- Using technology in education

Family and pupil journals

Develop family and pupil journals that are completed each week. Assign pupils a question to answer and ask parent carer to answer the same question too! For example, who do you admire most and why? Then have parent carers and pupils share their answers with one another and have pupils record their impressions of the conversation.

Timetable review

Encourage parent carer to regularly review their children's school timetable, inclusive of classes and extracurricular activities. Provide them with strategies to help their children take responsibility for their learning and understand the importance of setting priorities. Teach families active listening skills and to be supportive of activities their children really likes.

Take school home

Find ways to inform families about curriculum, school activities, and other pupil learning by allowing families to "Take School Home" through looking at DVDs or even posting Podcasts. Create videos on core academic areas and electives as well as navigating the school. Take parent carers on a virtual school tour where they meet teachers; learn of course offerings and much more! If needed, do the videos in various languages and use pupils to produce in a media production class. Also, if possible, post the videos on your school website and advertise in various ways that the videos are available.

Pick up nights

Hold family report pick up nights that require parent carer to personally collect their child's school report. Have a different theme or workshop each time and have teachers and school staff on hand to speak with parent carers about pupil's assessments and what they can do to continue to facilitate the learning process. Make a list of those pupils who need the most attention and personally reach out to their families to attend. For parent carer who can't attend that night, offer a few other times when they can pick up the report card or make other arrangements.

Study groups

Hold evening study groups where parent carer can examine and discuss the same educational issues as teachers and educational leaders, such as integrated curriculum, further /higher education and career counselling, differentiated learning. Ask their opinions on the topics. If there is a lot of interest around a certain area, consider starting a book club or other learning opportunity for families to learn more.

Meetings

Create a parent carer organisation that works in partnership with the school's parent carer engagement priorities. To increase membership and attendance, advertise the meetings as school outreach meetings and hold them multiple times throughout various locations in the school community. Have school leaders attend and plan an engaging agenda that consists of presentations about important school curriculum and contact information. Then add a unique element by splitting parent carer into small groups based on personal interests around school topics.

Transition events

Help to make options/higher education transitions become a school and community tradition. Hold a picnic or celebration at the end of every school year to send off school leavers. Invite selected lower school pupils and their families to attend and include information for them on further/higher education and career paths and preparing for what is next. Around the Christmas holidays invite recent school leavers back to school for a roundtable discussion to share the experiences they had during their first post-secondary term with pupils and their parent carer.

Theme nights

Hold a variety of different themed academic nights that engage both pupils and their parent carers in active learning. Have pupils write letters of invitation to their families and use pupils to help plan the event.
Some event topics may include:

- Parent-children book club discussion nights.
- Family game nights (incorporating maths, reading, arts, and thinking skills).
- Real-life science night with various activity stations revolving around earth, physics, life, chemistry or environmental science.
- Sports maths night using real football statistics.

Volunteering

Give parent carer specific information on how their services or talents can be directly utilised by volunteering at the school. Some examples may include asking parent carer to serve as morning greeters or guides in the school, helping out in the front office, cafeteria, or library, seeking help from community partners, or serving as a hall monitor.

Also, be sure to expand upon the traditional definition of family engagement so families understand the wide range of activities available, such as talking about the value of education, communicating with teachers, and discussing the school day.

Parents evenings

Practice and hold pupil-led parent carer– teacher evenings or advisement meetings. Use this time to involve both parent carers and pupils in class selection based on the pupil's study habits and interests. Also engage in setting pupil goals for the year or planning for post-secondary education or careers. Have both the pupil and the teacher write invitations to the parent personally inviting them to attend.

Reach out

dentify pupils, from assessment and progress reports, who could benefit from receiving more attention than what is already being provided by the school, and personally reach out to them and their families in unique ways. For example, hold a community outreach dinner off school grounds for groups of these families and invite a select group of teachers and leaders to each one. Make the event an informal affair and use the time to share ideas with pupils and hear parent carers' views and concerns. Have teachers and school staff donate or prepare food or collaborate with a community partner to donate their services.

School-home communications

Use various techniques to improve school-to-home communications. Train faculty and staff on creating interactive web pages that require information such as a brief biography, course descriptions, course outlines, required materials, requests for volunteers, and upcoming assignments. Also, invest in software that enables teachers to automatically send emails to parent carer on a weekly basis with a personal greeting along with their pupil's current academic assessments and progress. For those families without access to the internet, send monthly newsletters and provide teachers with stamped postcards so they can easily send quick good news notes home about a pupil's recent success.

Step up nights

Have a series of Step up nights for pupils and their families in the spring leading up to the summer before they move to their new schools. Hold information sessions on various topics such as what to expect, course offerings, extracurricular activity options, children development, transition requirements, planning for college and career, and definitions and expectations for family engagement. Have a mix of sessions both at the pupil's current school and the school they will be transitioning to next year. Offer tours and also incorporate a mix of pupils who already attend the target school to provide presentations and share experiences.

Knowing your families	Positive role models
Schedule a school staff professional development session/opportunity that takes school faculty and staff on a bus tour into the neighbourhoods of the pupils who attend the school. After the trip, have a discussion about what everyone saw, the impression it had on them, and what the school can do to work to address barriers to pupil and family engagement in the community visited.	Invite and actively seek parent carer to share experiences and information from their job or culture, demonstrate specific skills from work or hobbies, or talk about how what pupils are learning in school relates to the world of work. Ask parent carers and pupils to be spokespersons in community groups, faith-based organisations, civic clubs, and community associations about school events and other opportunities to support children in the community (support empowerment, positive identity, commitment to learning).

Action planning framework

Use this tool to plan for improvement, at a professional, class or whole school level.

Step 1

Use the gap analysis grid to help isolate key areas for school improvement.

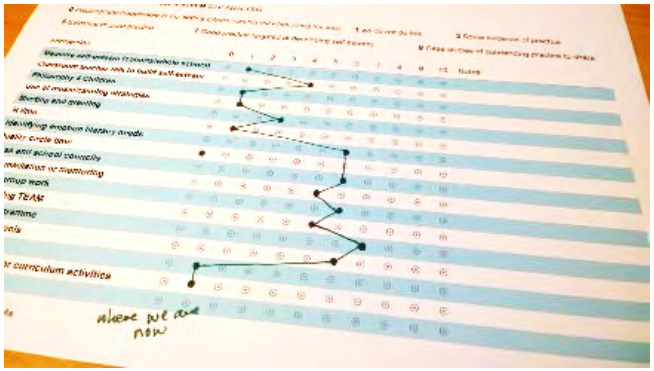
a. For each group of interventions, rate where you think your professional practice, your department or the school is at present.

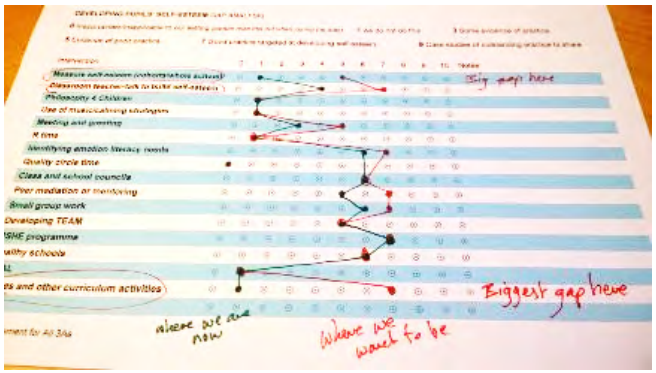
b. Draw a line connecting these points

c. Then decide where on the scale you would like to be in a year's time. Connect the dots. Where the gap is greatest is where you should put the effort!

Step 2

Complete the first stage of the action plan framework. Revisit every term.





Welcoming and including families gap analysis

0 Inappropriate/Inapplicable to our setting (please miss this out when joining the dots)
1 I/we do not do this
3 Some evidence of practice in this area
5 Some evidence of good practice
7 Good practice impacting on learner progress/achievement
9 Case studies of outstanding practice to share

Strategy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Notes
All staff are skilled at conducting conversations with parents	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
All staff are skilled at active listening	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
Feedback from parent carers (comments, complaints) is acted upon	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
New parent carers participate in a wide range of induction activities	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
Parent carers feel that the school is a warm, friendly and accessible environment	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
The welcome created is an inclusive one (e.g. welcoming the extended family, in the different languages spoken at home, and with easy access for those with disabilities).	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
Families and learners are asked for their ideas on family involvement.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
Teachers engage with parent carers in a variety of ways on a day-to-day basis in order to build a positive relationship.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
The school provides parent carers with knowledge and strategies to support their children to learn at home	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
School employs strategies to actively involve parent carers in homework and assignments	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
School activities take into and involve the wider community	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
There are a range of ways for families and staff to meet and share ideas about ways people could support the school, and of how the school could support the community.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	

Welcoming and including families gap analysis

Strategy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Notes
There are fun activities to take part in and let people get to know each other outside the school (e.g. a barbecue in the summer).	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
The social events are inclusive and not too expensive. There are early morning and evening opportunities to attract parent carers who work full time (e.g. family breakfast events).	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
The school attracts more families in by doubling or even tripling up on the reason why parent carers are coming in (e.g. coffee evening combined with parent carers' evening).	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
There is a buddy system, drawing on parents carers from the community who are eager to come into school to support those who want to come in but are not at ease or confident enough to come alone? (This can be a valuable tool to break down barriers and promote inclusion.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
There are opportunities for families to volunteer to help with one-off things with no long-term commitment. There are opportunities to take part that don't need much skill or confidence.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
The school is aware of any specific skills that parent carers have and they are encouraged to share skills and experience in the school setting.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
School checks to ensure no parents or groups are excluded from activities and communications.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
School understands the barriers to engagement in their community, and take steps to address these.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
The school deploys creative ways of engaging hard-to-reach parent carers.	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	
Other	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	

Planning for change

Changing attitudes, behaviours and practice is not always easy. This framework is designed to build on the gap analysis, and help you embed the changes required to impact on Welcoming and Including Families within your school community.

1. School context and indentifies priorities	
What are your/the school's strengths? (in terms of welcoming and including families)	
What are the chosen areas to develop?	
What is the resource/training implications?	

2. Community engagement and success measures	
How will you engage with teaching and non-teaching staff?	
What materials/resources/training/briefing materials might you need?	
How will you engage with your parent carer?	
As this whole module is about engaging with parent carer more effectively, think about how you intend to inform them of your plans.	
How will you involve your other leaders and governing body?	
What materials/resources/training/briefing materials might you need?	

2. Community engagement and success measures	
What existing pupil data will reflect success? What might be your targets key performance indicators (KPI's)? Target group Attendance rates Pupil progress Attainment Other well-being indicators	
What extra evidence might you need, and how will you collect it?	
What do you perceive as the biggest barriers to progress, and how might you overcome them?	

Planning

Term 1 - first four months			
Action/Activity	By whom?	By when?	Achieved?

Evaluation: How successful have actions been? How do you know (e.g. parent carer voice)? Do subsequent plans/priorities need to change?

Approximately how many staff have received updates and training through activity this term?
How many learners have been consulted/contributed?
How many parent carers have been consulted/contributed?

Planning

Term 2 - next four months			
Action/Activity	By whom?	By when?	Achieved?

Evaluation: How successful have actions been? How do you know (e.g. parent carer voice)? Do subsequent plans/priorities need to change?

Approximately how many staff have received updates and training through activity this term?
How many learners have been consulted/contributed?
How many parent carers have been consulted/contributed?

Planning

Term 1 - last four months			
Action/Activity	By whom?	By when?	Achieved?

Evaluation: How successful have actions been? How do you know (e.g. parent carer voice)? Do subsequent plans/priorities need to change?

Approximately how many staff have received updates and training through activity this term?
How many learners have been consulted/contributed?
How many parent carers have been consulted/contributed?

Final review and evaluation

How sucessful were your interventions? What school data/evidence supports your assertions? (Evidence from questionnaires, pupil voice, data, group or individual success stories, etc.)

What further action/activity are you considering?

Are there any resources/approaches that you feel need further development/investment either locally or nationally?

Partnership between school and home – core values charter overview

Resource

A core values charter of common shared principles about an effective working relationship between school and home.

Purpose

The values charter provides a model for building genuine good quality partnerships between the school and home. This is a co-produced resource which is designed to demonstrate the school community's commitment to work together support learning, emotional wellbeing, and positive outcomes for children and young people.

This example core values charter was produced by Cornwall's Parent Carer Forum and can be adapted to suit the local context.

The Rotherham charter produced in partnership between services, parents, schools, settings, children and young people is another example of good practice. https://rotherhamcharter.co.uk/about/charter-principles/

They identified five key benefits of having a charter:

1. Build stronger relationships with parent carers, children and young people
2. Reduce concerns and complaints
3. Identify good practice and how to make positive changes
4. Provide evidence of effective partnerships for Ofsted
5. Better outcomes for children and young people and their families

Who will be involved?

Senior leaders, staff, parent carers, pupils

Step 1

Organise a training session for a selected group of senior leaders, school staff, pupils and parent carers on working in partnership, become more familiar with the charter process and to see how it can support their school and community.

Step 2

Review and adapt the example values charter to reflect your school and community.

Step 3

Senior leader team and governors to review and approve.

Step 4

Disseminate the values charter across the school and community.

Step 5

Put the values charter on the school website.

You might consider displaying the values charter in the school entrance.

Core values charter

Our school community of teachers, support staff, parent carers and governors are committed to:

Open and honest communication

- We will communicate clearly, honestly and openly.
- We will communicate with you in a way that works for you.
- We will not use jargon.
- We will acknowledge and respect each other's expertise.



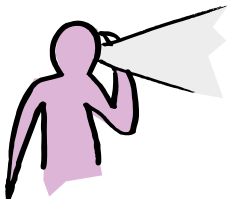
Building trust

- We will treat you fairly and with respect.
- We will be approachable.
- We will follow up on any agreed actions.
- We will help you to access information, advocacy and support.



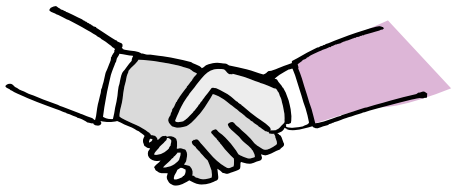
Listening

- We will actively listen to what you have to say.
- We will support you in reaching out to us.
- We will provide a safe, non-judgemental and confidential space to talk.
- We value your feedback and strive to be the best we can be.



Mutual respect

- We will listen and try to understand each other.
- We may experience differences of opinion and that's okay.
- We will respect each other's views.
- We will celebrate the positives and what is working well together.



Working together

- We will work in partnership and involve you every step of the way.
- We will work together to overcome any barriers.
- We support multi-agency working.
- We may not always have the answers but together we will work them out.



Resources

Principle 3: Communication

- **Guide to effective communications overview (parts 1-3)**
- **Guide to effective communications (part 1); the leaders role**
- **Guide to effective communications (part 2); improving your communication**
- **Guide to effective communications (part 3); communication methods**
- **Training for positive and effective consultations overview**
- **Training: diamond nine activity, positive communication**
- **Training: key features of effective consultation meetings**
- **Training: framework for the effective consultation**
- **Training: stem questions to ask during an effective consultation**
- **Training: effective consultations – observation record**
- **Effective communications case study – Stratton Primary School**



Guide to effective communications overview (parts 1-3)

Resource
Guide to effective communications (parts 1-3)

Purpose
To enhance communications in your setting.

Use this three-part guide to enhance communications in your setting.

Each of the three parts can be used to provide the basis for a stand-alone staff training session which will enable you to embed these elements in the daily culture and ethos of your setting.

Who will be involved?
All staff

Step 1
Use the guide to audit current practice.

Step 2
Use the audit to develop a communications action plan.

Step 3
Use the guides to form the basis of whole staff inset.

Step 4
Some settings may choose to use the key elements from the guides as a reference guide for practitioners at key interfaces (class doors, school reception, meeting rooms etc).

Guide to effective communication (part 1); the leaders role

Managing communications effectively is a key dimension of leadership.

Effective communication underpins the knowledge, skills and dispositions school leaders require to have a direct and indirect influence on student outcomes.

Taking time to review your communications strategy and ideas will be time well spent. Many problems, in and out of schools, can be directly traced to the effectiveness of your and your school's communications – whether information was communicated or not, what was communicated, how it was communicated, and who communicated it.

Taking time to think about what you want to say will also ensure you maintain your integrity and professionalism, that of your school, and of the wider educational community.

Communication Planning

Head teachers apply a range of formal and informal communication skills every day. Communications may be deliberately planned or ad hoc; face to face or virtual; written, video or verbal; digital or non-digital.

Use a table like the one below to help you get an overview of your communications:

Who?	Why?	How?
Students		
Leadership team		
Teachers		
Parent carers – current and prospective		Facebook, SMS, newsletters, face to face, presentations, phone, special events, learning conferences, parent teacher evenings
Support staff: office staff, learning assistants, support staff, caretakers		
Wider community stakeholders		
Chair of Governors		
Governing body		
Local head teachers, other schools, mentor or supervisor		
Outside agencies – for example LEA		
Parent teacher association, alumni association		
Media		
Other		

Then consider how effective your existing communication strategies are:

- What are your key reasons for communicating with your audiences? What are your key messages?
- Are your reasons for communicating helping you lead change or lead learning in your school?
- How do you ensure your key messages are communicated clearly and consistently?
- How does the way you are communicating help you to build trusting and respectful relationships with your audiences?
- How do your communication strategies change over time? Are there two or three aspects of communication that you should emphasise during the next year?
- When did you last review your strategies? What feedback on them do you have or need?

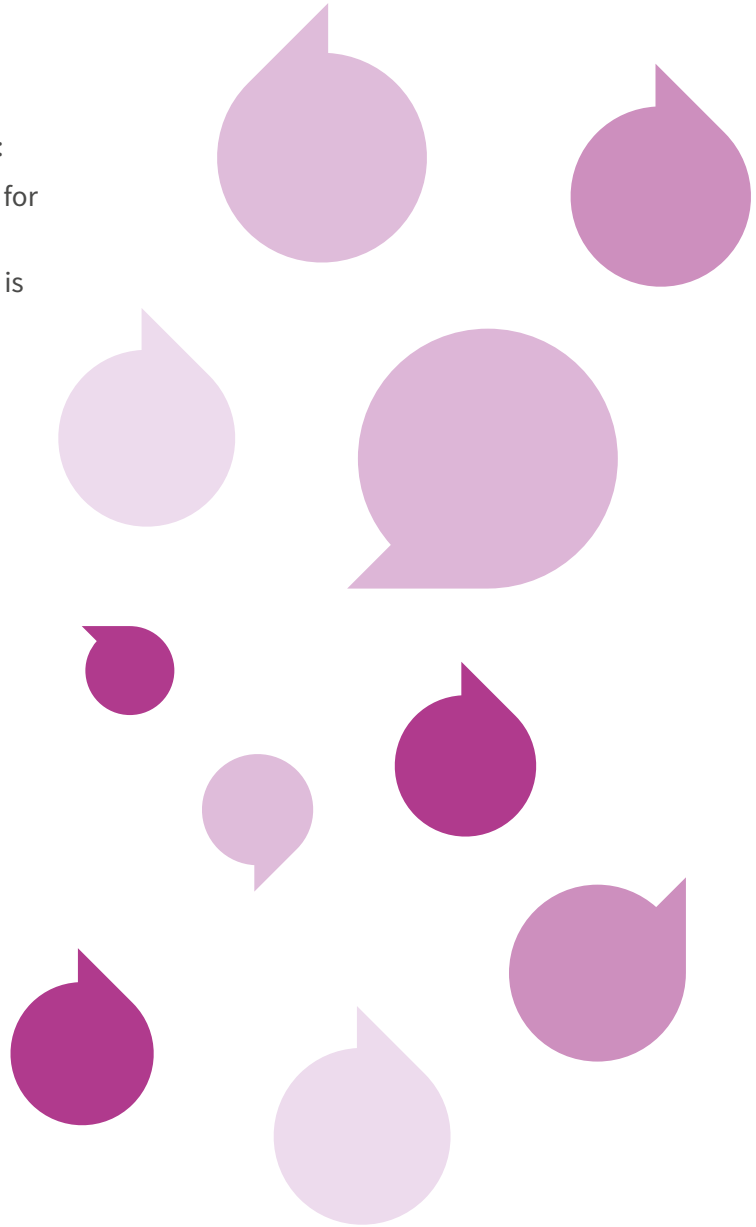
It may be useful for settings to have a policy or a practice on who communicates formally on behalf of the school, for example if contacted by the media.

It is essential to understand the requirements of UK privacy and copyright laws.

In-School Communication

Internal communication is just as important as communicating outside the school. Elements of good practice for internal communication include:

- championing and being a good role model for clear and consistent communication
- matching your words to your actions – this is part of developing integrity as a leader
- being committed to open, two-way communication
- face-to-face communication
- communicating with empathy – communicating bad news as effectively as good news
- seeing communication as an essential leadership capability, not as a set of techniques.



Guide to effective communication (part 2); Improving your communication

External feedback

Consider using an interviewer from outside the school, such as your school improvement partner or LA curriculum advisor, to carry out a fact-finding review. The interviewer needs to be someone you can rely on to give you honest and constructive feedback.

Prepare yourself to handle any criticism that may be brought up. Try to view any criticisms as constructive. When you establish that you appreciate feedback and actively take it on board, people will keep you well informed.

You might ask an interviewer to:

- ask what the two or three most important school development actions and intentions you have been communicating to staff are.
- ask a range of staff what they think you have been communicating about, and your effectiveness in communicating about those topics. The interviewer simply takes notes and does not comment on the descriptions, apart from seeking clarity. Four or five staff from a range of contexts is plenty; in a small school, may be one or two at most.
- interview five or six students across a range of year levels. Ask each to describe what you have been communicating. This may be best done in small groups to assist the flow of description and to bring out the range of views.
- write up what has been discovered and report back to you on the style and effectiveness of your communication.

You may be able to identify gaps and issues with the interviewer. Check whether the choices you've made about the methods you're using are the best ones to focus on.

After getting this snapshot of your communication, use it to help shape new communications. Include this review and your reflections as part of your appraisal.

Internal feedback

Ask a trusted and experienced colleague to provide honest and constructive feedback on any presentations you make. Ask for feedback on a few specific aspects, such as the clarity of your message, quality of your message, audience response, and presentation style. Or ask for feedback on one thing you did well and one thing you could improve on or do differently next time.

Use this feedback strategy several times a year and remember that this evidence of professional growth and reflection can also feed into your appraisal.

Internal staff communications

In any good communication, it is important to establish trust and confidence, without which your message may be lost, misconstrued or, worse, ignored.

Build understanding and rapport with staff by meeting with them in their own classrooms from time to time. Staff talking in their own workspaces will be able to put their views across more clearly in context and are more likely to tell you the reality of what is going on more quickly. Consider informal walks through classrooms; or attending team meetings in an informal capacity.

Conversely, reprimand, criticism, or any disciplinary communication should take place in your office, where you set the stage and the level of formality you want. Remember praise in public, correct in private.

Listening

Effective communication is a two-way process. Bear in mind that you will learn more when you are listening than when you are speaking, and that people will not open up to those they consider poor listeners.

Consider:

- focussing on the moment and the person speaking – adopting a listening attitude
- avoiding distractions, for example move away from your computer and put away your phone
- asking questions instead of just giving answers
- giving your full attention to what the other party is saying – not just thinking about what you want to say next
- focusing on what you might learn instead of what you want to teach
- asking how you might help
- seeking clarification and explanation, especially when the tone of the speaker is somewhat critical
- restating what you think they have said in order to seek clarity and agreement
- checking whose voices are missing or underrepresented.

Adopt a listening approach for:

- 'sounds' of learning at your school, such as evidence of curiosity, inquiry, earnest endeavour, shared thinking and collaboration, and teacher facilitation
- 'sounds' of teachers' shared approach to teaching, such as team teaching, collaborative planning, questioning, and supporting.

Adopt an analytical ear for the sounds:

- you want to hear that are absent.
- you hear but would prefer not to hear.

Add all these sounds to your knowledge bank about the school and use them at appropriate times to make progress on development.

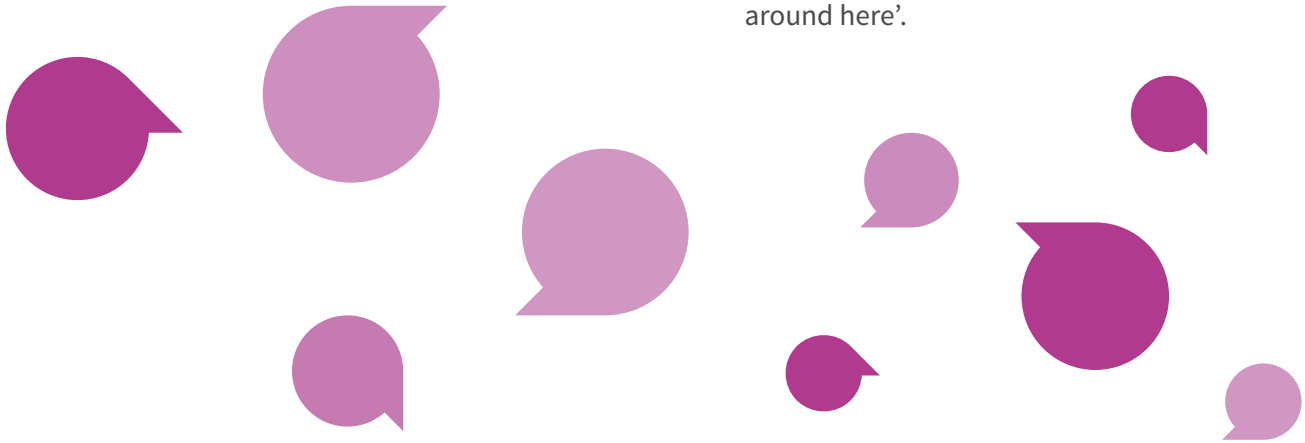
Community communication

Begin with the end in mind. Remember that senior leaders can strengthen partnerships and networks to enhance student learning.

Extend your knowledge so that you become an expert on your school community. Share so that education becomes everyone's business.

Have a broad and simple community communication goal that is appropriate to your school's setting. For example:

- a new headteacher in a small rural school may decide to 'develop and maintain strong interactive communication patterns with each family about their children's education'.
- a new headteacher in a large urban school may decide that 'during the first year, my communications within and across the school community will help me gain a clear understanding of how things are done around here'.



Guide to effective communication (part 3); Communication methods

Personal communications

Your mood, actions, and demeanour.

Your body language, moods, and actions convey powerful messages.

- Confidence in what you are saying and doing is essential. Studies suggest that if you appear confident, others are more likely to agree to what you might propose. Conversely, the less confident you appear in your own message, the more objections you are likely to meet.
- Failure to complete or carry out a routine task suggests the routine is not important. Similarly, failure to follow through on a goal or promise will undermine your credibility. Ensure the link between what you say and what you do remains close. If a disparity develops between them for any reason, explain why.
- Remaining approachable while being regarded and consulted as a professional leader with significant knowledge about teaching and learning requires principals to maintain a cheerful demeanour even if the going is tough. The grumpiness of a senior leader can quickly pervade their school.
- Remember that you are now a public figure and subject to much more scrutiny than you were as a teacher. Be clear, consistent and transparent so that all members of the community know that what they see is what they get. Enjoy answering questions and discussing the school vision and goals and listen attentively to all community members.

Phone calls and emails

Treat calls and emails as an important part of the job. These are often the first experience people have of your school.

- Have an enthusiastic phone voice and manner, even on the worst day.
- Clearly identify yourself.
- Use the email subject line to your advantage, that is, as a short summary.
- Put aside time to answer phone calls and emails. This helps you with time management. Perhaps publicise the best time to ring in newsletters.
- Answer phone messages and emails within 24 hours if possible but don't rush answers that you need longer to think about.
- Try for a balance of five calls home to praise students for every one that is critical.
- Check that the school's answerphone messages, hold music and so on, are compatible with school goals and context. Make them warm, welcoming, and inclusive.

Face-to-face communication

- Always listen carefully. Try not to interrupt – think about how much you would dislike it yourself.
- Appreciate critics and thank them.
- Treat each conversation as being crucial.
- Ensure your agendas are applied; take advantage of face-to-face meetings to initiate new discussion about things of importance to you and your school.
- Make notes. In particular, record agreed times and dates. Tell the person you are talking to what you are recording. Put follow-up actions in your calendar.
- Work on reducing your use of conversation dead-air fillers like 'um' and 'er', as well as cliches and phrases such as 'you know', 'basically', 'to be honest', 'at the end of the day', 'the fact of the matter is', 'sort of thing', and so on.
- Difficult conversations with adults will occur. Don't become defensive – breathe and count to 10.

Communication channels

Internet presence

What's your school's digital footprint like? You and the board of governors have ultimate responsibility for it.

- Decide whether you need closed or public access media platforms, and for whom.
- Choose platforms that are easy to use, for your school and for the audience(s).
- Be clear, concise, professional and safe in your content, for example do not post images of children without parental permission.
- Check content enhances your school's key messages, values and beliefs.
- Have protocols in place to manage the content.
- Have more than one person responsible for producing content, moderating content and monitoring for inappropriate responses.

School events

Treat all events as great communication opportunities.

- Make events as culturally reflective and responsible as possible.
- Personally meet and greet as many parent carers and community members as possible.
- Try not to speak for too long. Keep the focus on student achievement and your school's current goals. Make it clear what the school's core business is.
- Ensure students feel included and rewarded for their effort and achievement.
- Thank and acknowledge parent carers for their support in the learning of their children and for the school.

Newsletters

Newsletters may be paper or digital. Find out how parent carers and the local community wish to receive news about the school and its events. Offer a range of options.

School community newsletters should provide the means to inform, promote, gather, and educate. Decide on how you want the balance of these four tasks to work in each newsletter.

To get your intended audience to read your news, it's best to make it brief, to the point, and customised. Take into account the amount of information people are dealing with that day. People have become very discerning information consumers.

- Ensure the newsletter provides the means to convey important messages about your school's vision, values, strategies and plans.
- Align the messages to support your key leadership activities: leading change, leading learning and problem solving.
- Establish and stick to a regular publication timetable.
- Use a template for easy preparation of each edition.
- Enlist others as reporters to gather copy, for example students and staff.
- Quality is important but stick to the budget. Establish the highest standards for accuracy of detail and grammar. Have a neutral proof-reader.
- Make sure the school has parental permission to use any photos of students included.
- Set aside a specific time to do your part of the newsletter, preferably several days before publication is due.
- Make sure digital newsletters are easy to read online or to download and open.

Remember you have overall responsibility for your newsletters. You must have the final say on what is included and how it is said.

Training for positive communications and effective consultations with parent carers overview

Resource

Training materials to support effective and positive communications. The resources include: -

- Activity on the principles of effective communication
- Key features of effective consultation meetings with parents/carers
- Effective consultation model
- Stem questions for effective conversations
- Observation record for an effective conversation

Purpose

To support education settings to identify the principles of positive communications and the key features of effective consultations.

Who will be involved?

All staff
Parent carers

Step 1

Structure the materials into a training session that will support effective communication and consultations between staff and parent carers.

Step 2

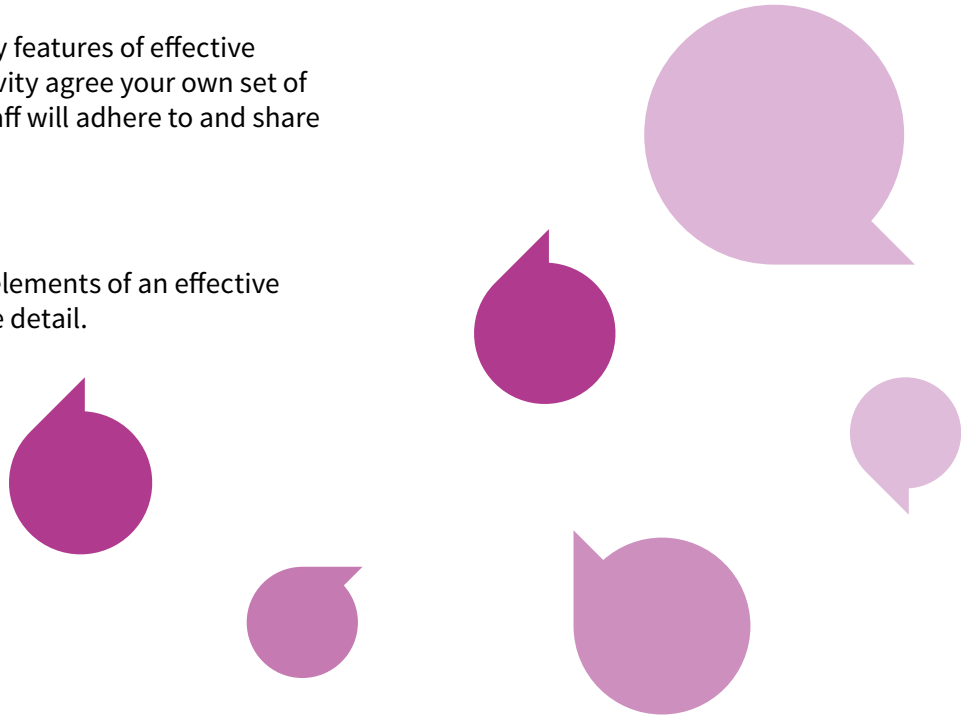
As an outcome of key features of effective communication activity agree your own set of principles that all staff will adhere to and share with parent carers.

Step 3

Go through the key elements of an effective consultation in some detail.

Step 5

Ensure that all conversations with parent carers follow the principles of positive and effective consultations.



Training: Diamond nine activity, positive communication

Over the next couple of pages are nine key principles that underpin positive communication practice with parent carers.

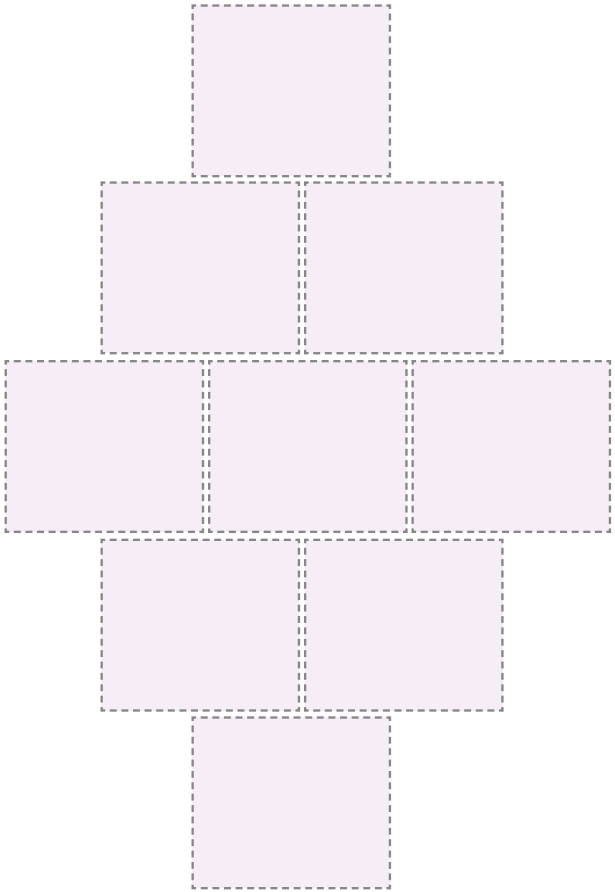
Cut out and rearrange into a diamond nine formation, with the principle that best describes current school practice at the top of the diamond, and the principle that is least evident at the bottom.

Consider ways of changing practice and behaviours so that the lowest three of the ranked principles become more apparent in everyday school practice.

This activity is suitable for use as a personal reflection exercise, within a subject group, faculty, or across a whole education setting.

If conducted in groups, it is worth combining groups to see if consensus can be reached.

If consensus cannot be reached, why do different individuals have different perceptions?



Nine principles that underpin positive communication practice (page 1 of 2)

No Delays

Any written report and learning targets from any meeting are sent home as soon as possible.

Right of reply

Parent carers given an opportunity to amend and/or comment.

Plain English

All reports written in language that parent carers and the child or young person can understand.

Keep it going

On-going communication with parent carers between consultation meetings must be a priority if positive relationships are to be maintained.

Quick chat

A quick phone call or text is the least formal way of letting parent carers know how their child is progressing.

Accentuate the positive

If you have agreed to write to families, keep the messages short and positive. If any disciplinary issues arise, either speak to parent carers on the phone or visit the home.

Nine principles that underpin positive communication practice (page 2 of 2)

Eliminate the negative

Do not use home-school books or on-going written communications with parent carers as a way of gathering evidence for possible exclusion.

Learning support

Regularly send home resources and instructions for how parent carers can support their child at home and gather feedback on how their child managed/ enjoyed the activity.

Celebrate small steps

Nothing motivates more than praise linked to specific outcomes (assignment completion, progress, hitting milestones and targets, attitude and behaviour change, etc).

Training: Key features of effective consultation meetings with parent carers

It is important that teachers know how to facilitate effective consultations with parent carers in order to improve their engagement in the learning and development of the child/young person. It takes time to establish a relationship, based on mutual respect, between parent carers and teachers. It also takes both sides to be willing to listen and to be non-judgmental. Identified below are some of the key features of effective consultations with parent carers.

Sensitive facilitation, including:

- The most successful consultations involve a key teacher, the parent carers and the pupil.
- Where there is a need for the involvement of other professionals parent carers are consulted beforehand.
- The teacher allows parent carers time to talk but also shapes the consultation through the use of questions and summarising.
- Parent carers are full partners in any decisions that are made during the consultation about changes to provision.
- Parent carers are given information rather than advice so that they can make informed decisions.

Effective preparation, including:

For school staff and other professionals:

- Shared understanding and clear expectations across all staff, including other agencies, about the expectations of the conduct of consultation meetings.
- Acknowledgement from all professionals that parent carers know their own children best and that each child and family is unique.
- Agreement about what will be written down during the consultation, when it will be written and what that written information will be used for.

For parent carers:

- Personal invitation from the teacher.
- Clarity about who will be at the consultation from the school or other agencies.
- Let parent carers know how much time has been allocated for the consultation.
- Consider childcare arrangements for younger siblings.
- A small number of questions for parent carer to consider helping them be ready for the consultation.
- Offer parents an advocate (e.g. from Parent Partnership Service) or to bring a friend or family member as a supporter.

For the child or young person:

- Make arrangements for the child or young person to be present for at least part of the consultation.
- Support the child or young person to give his or her views -'No decision about me without me'.
- All recording written in language that the child or young person can understand.

Welcoming environment, including:

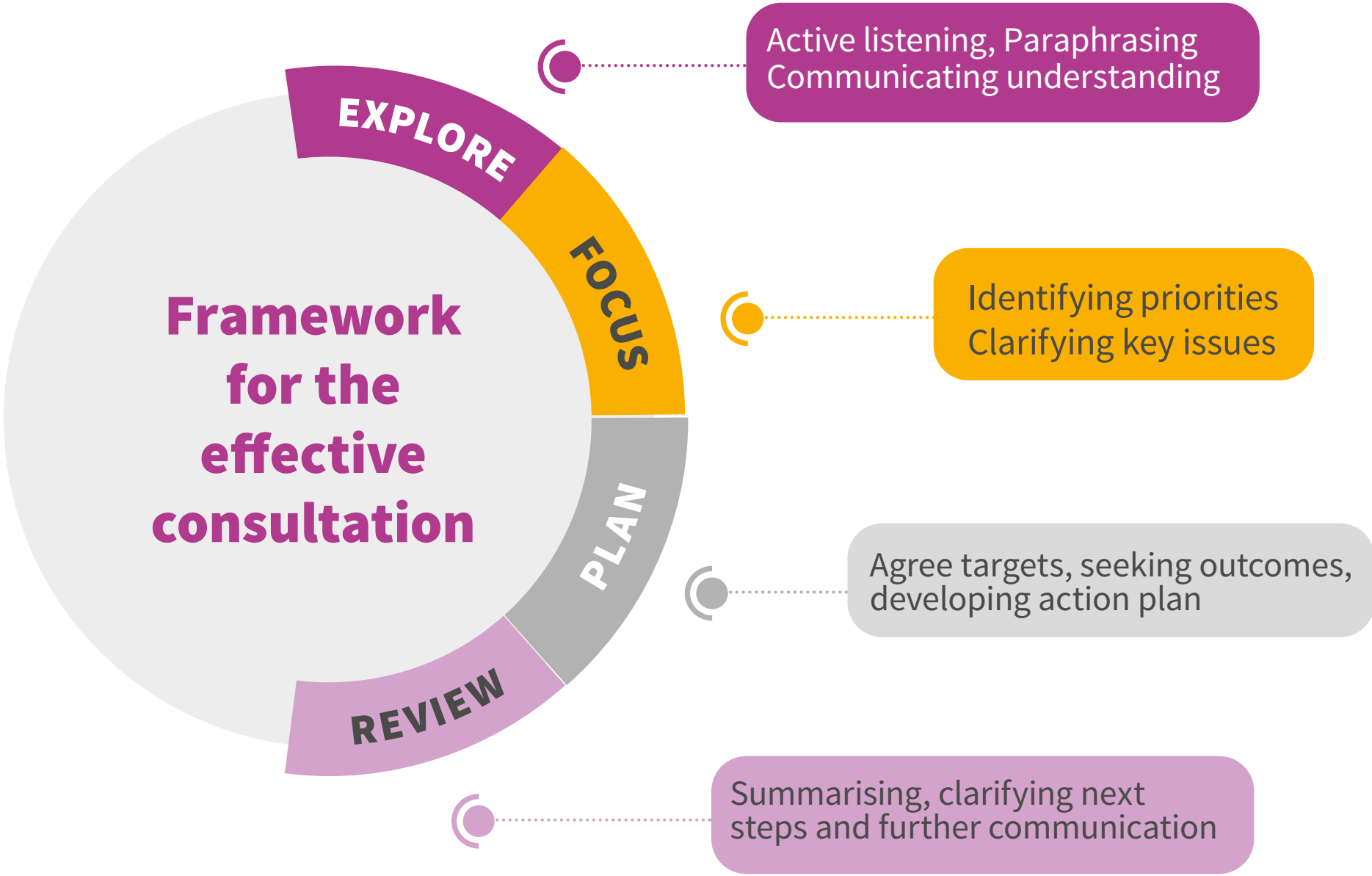
- A personal welcome for parent carers at school entrance.
- Clear 'no interruptions' instruction to other staff.
- Allow plenty of time (minimum 30 minutes) and assure parent carers that they can take the time they need.
- Simple refreshments, a drink and a biscuit, water.
- Comfortable adult-size chairs positioned in a conversational style.

Effective communication, including:

- Positive body language and facial expressions
- Take time to check shared understanding
- Teacher facilitates rather than leads
- Simple, straightforward language avoiding jargon or technical terms.

Communication with parent carers between consultations, including:

- Agreement at the consultation about the frequency of communications and the best way of communicating with each family, e.g. phone call, text, email, home visit, etc.
- Date of next consultation if possible agreed before parent carers leave.
- Any written report and pupil targets from the meeting are sent home as soon as possible and parent carers given an opportunity to amend or comment.


Framework for the effective consultation
EXPLORE
FOCUS
PLAN
REVIEW
Active listening, Paraphrasing
Communicating understanding
Identifying priorities
Clarifying key issues
Agree targets, seeking outcomes, developing action plan
Summarising, clarifying next steps and further communication

Training: Stem questions to ask during an effective consultation

Identification of Issue:

- What do you make of……?
- How do you feel about…..?
- What concerns you the most about…..?
- What seems to be your main obstacle?
- What is holding you back from…..?

Further information:

- What do you mean by…..?
- Tell me more about it.
- What else?
- What have you tried so far?
- What will you have to do to get the job done?
- What support do you need to accomplish…..?

Hypothetical:

- If you could do it over again what would you do differently?
- If you could do this any way you wanted, what would you do?

Outcomes:

- How do you want…..to turn out?
- What do you want?
- What is your desired outcome?

Planning:

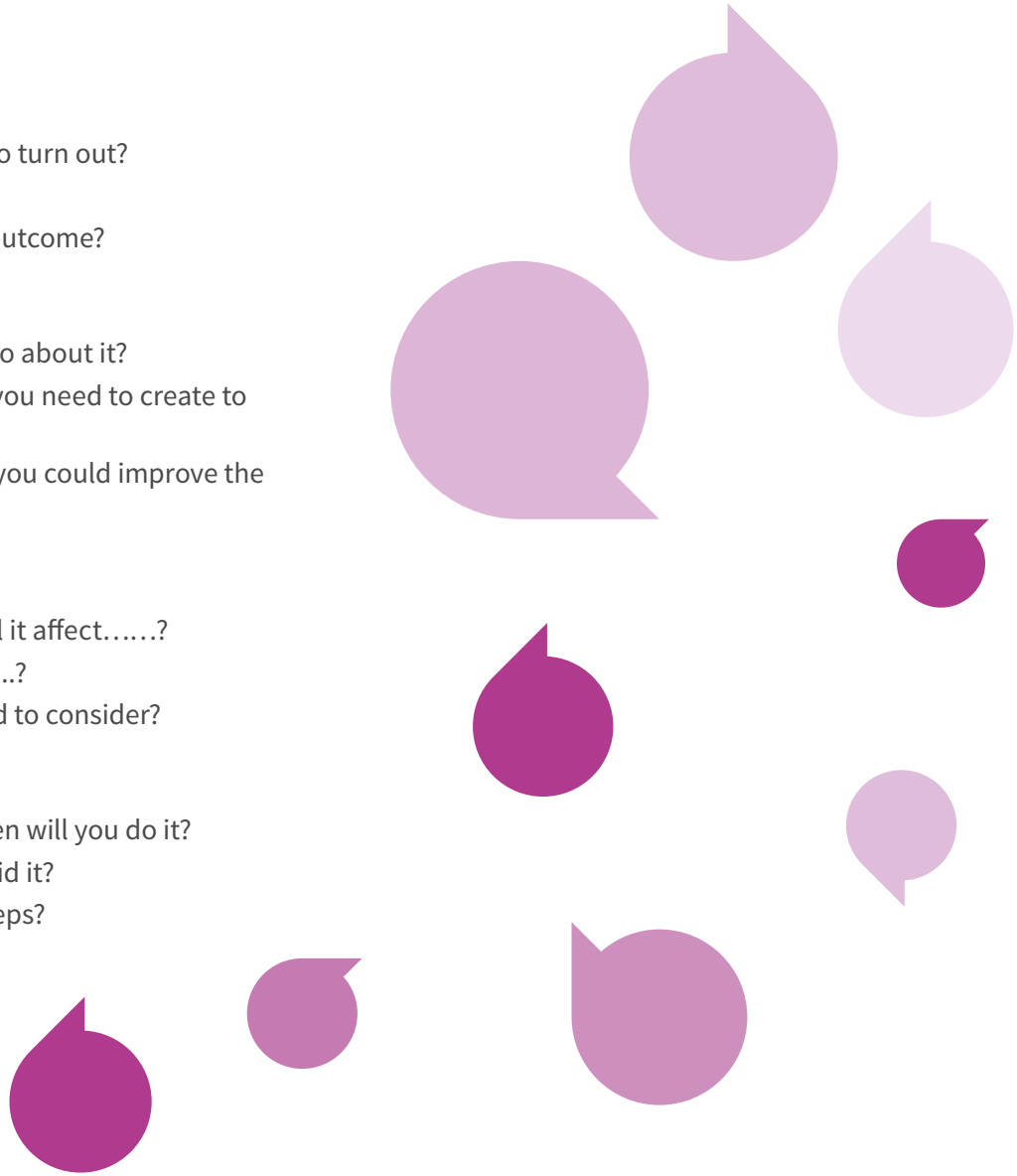
- What do you plan to do about it?
- What kind of plan do you need to create to accomplish….?
- How do you suppose you could improve the situation?

In Relation to:

- If you do this, how will it affect……?
- How does this affect….?
- What else do you need to consider?

Taking action:

- What will you do? When will you do it?
- How will I know you did it?
- What are your next steps?



Training: Effective consultations – observation record

Work in groups of three, one taking the role of the teacher and one taking the role of parent carer. The third person is the observer. The observer can use the following proforma in order to record evidence of the skills use during the conversation, in order to give feedback to the small group. The evidence should be constructive and include what worked well and any opportunity that could be developed.

Skills used to EXPLORE e.g. active listening, paraphrasing, understanding, questioning.	Evidence:
Skills used to FOCUS e.g. identifying the issue(s), clarifying the priorities, agreeing the key issues.	Evidence:
Skills used to PLAN progress e.g. agreeing targets, planning tasks, seeking outcomes, agreeing an action plan.	Evidence:

Skills used to REVIEW the conversation e.g. summarising, clarifying next steps, agreeing who will do what, arranging further communication.	Evidence:

Additional comments by B:

Additional comments by A:

Parent carer engagement case study – Stratton Primary School

Focus

To develop the communication between school and home for reception parents. To provide examples of pupil learning and activities that could extend learning at home via Tapestry for Key Stage 1 pupils.

Context

Stratton is a growing primary school and will be a two-form entry school within the next four years. The ethos of the school is that children will engage with 'successful learning in a happy environment'. We work hard on prioritising the wellbeing of our pupils, staff and community and have achieved the Carnegie Mental Health School Award over the 2020-2021 academic year.

Parent carer engagement with the school has grown over the last few years, but we find that they are often most concerned about the 'happy' part of our ethos and we need to consistently work on the ambition for our families to achieve and maintain the 'successful learning,' which is of equal importance at Stratton.

Approach

We introduced Tapestry, an online journal, for reception children around five years ago to increase the connectivity and level of communication with parents within their first year at primary school. This replaced our old system for recording children's learning in scrapbooks. Interestingly some parent carers, and staff, were resistant to the change at first, with many stating that their child's learning journey was kept as a memento of their time starting primary school. However, once the parent carers were able to see more about their child's progress in school via regular updates to their online learning journal, this resistance soon dissipated.

During the pandemic, Tapestry worked on increasing facilities for uploading activities. We had only previously used Tapestry for recording observations of children at school or at home, and there had not been the facility to set specific tasks for children.

We were able to:

- share information and useful resources that parent carers could access
- set tasks and then send them to particular groups of children
- share videos of us teaching difficult and new concepts
- share power points with our voice narrating
- share one of the teachers reading a story to the children
- respond quickly with a solution or feedback to learning
- give quick assistance when needed
- schedule all the work and tasks.

"All of these factors enabled us to make the home learning more personalised to our children and families. They knew it was us at the other end and not all mass-produced resources"

Reception/year 1 teacher

Due to the possibilities now available, we chose to use this platform with the whole of key stage 1 during the second school closure. We also provided additional staff training and reminded parent carers of Year 1 and Year 2 about how to set up their accounts. This decision was based on the fact that all the children who had started Stratton in reception would have had previous experience using the platform, so it would not be an additional barrier to home learning.

Staff used the activities planner to set their home learning tasks for all key stage 1 children in the second school closure and were also able to upload recordings (maximum length of 10 minutes) of themselves reading aloud or teaching specific aspects of a lesson.

The capacity to set groupings on Tapestry, enabled the staff team to set appropriate learning to the children. For example, the children were grouped according to their Read Write Inc. group in school and therefore were able to continue with their targeted group learning whilst at home.

Impact

The impact for the reception children and children with SEN has been clear. Parent carers comment on their delight at seeing their child making progress in specific aspects and there is regular dialogue between parent carers and members of staff.

During the school closure, the use of Tapestry allowed parent carers to see modelled examples of the learning expectation, have specific tasks set to meet individual pupil needs and to receive feedback from the teacher regarding specific learning points.

Most parents were able to engage with the online platform as this was something they were used to, and where this did not happen, this was able to be identified quickly and supported appropriately.

- 91% of parents, who responded to a survey, felt that Tapestry was an effective online platform.
- 72% of parents felt that their child was usually well engaged with their learning at home.
- 85% of parents felt their child's learning was well supported through feedback from the teacher.

One point that arose from the use of Tapestry for key stage 1 was that it does not have the facility for online meeting or live sessions. As key stage 2 at Stratton were already using google classroom for online provision, we were able to set up all key stage 1 children with a google classroom account. This enabled key stage 1 and reception children to meet online with their teachers. Feedback from parent carers was that this was a welcome addition.

For reception children and children with complex SEN, using Tapestry as an on-going communication tool has an impact on working in partnership with parent carers. It is very user friendly and appropriate for key stage 1 learning tasks.

> **"I can't imagine the amount of man hours that all of these extra resources have taken to set up. Obviously, the lessons probably haven't been delivered in quite the same way by us at home, but I think it's amazing that the children have been able to carry on with their learning like they have. It's been lovely to see it in action and we really appreciate all of the incredibly hard work that has been put into it all."**
>
> Reception parent.

Key learning

Tapestry is a useful tool to communicate with parent carers, particularly in early years foundation stage and SEN settings. We also learnt that:-

- Updates need to be regular from both home and school in order for parent carers to see the benefit of using an online journal over using a paper-based version.
- Using a multi-media approach has helped engage both children and their parent carers with learning at home. For example, songs uploaded for music practise, videos of the teacher's input for a lesson, or visual modelled examples of the expected outcome of a task.
- Feedback can be given on an individual basis, as well as for groups, and is also task specific.
- For online learning purposes, Tapestry lacks the capacity to be able to meet online or live, so additional systems would need to be in place.

Next steps

We will be continuing to develop our use of the planned activities section to promote reading and vocabulary to our reception intake in 2021.

We would like to further develop our provision for parent carers with face to face meetings based on the learning observations that they see on Tapestry. E.g. Read Write Inc. meetings to coincide with the videos posted on the online journal.

Using a multi-media approach has helped engage both children and their parent carers with learning at home.



Resources

Principle 4: Support for learning

- **Auditing, reviewing and developing approaches to home learning overview**
- **Homework/home learning audit**
- **Support for learning toolkit**
- **Covid-19 support resources from the Education Endowment Foundation**
- **Reading and maths programmes**
- **Everyone ready for school**
- **Family learning**
- **Re-thinking parent's evenings**
- **Systematic practice and formulation overview**
- **Case study Pondhu Primary School – systematic formulation**



Auditing, reviewing and developing approaches to home learning overview

Resource

Audit of existing practices around homework/ home learning and developing a homework/ home learning policy

Purpose

Auditing the effectiveness of current approaches to homework/home learning allows a school to focus on practices which help or hinder parent carer engagement and pupil achievement in this area and consider any aspects that need further development.

Collecting information from parent carers about their views on the school's existing (or proposed) home learning policy allows it to be shaped to needs and wants.

The process can be used to make or reinforce clear links between a child's learning in school and at home.

Who will be involved?

Senior Leaders, Teachers, Pupils, Parent carers

Step 1 Audit existing practice

In school, use the homework audit below to evaluate the effectiveness of your current approaches to setting homework/home learning. The audit is not exhaustive and can be added to, or adapted, to suit your own school's ideas about home learning.

As a staff team, complete the audit using the red, amber, green (RAG) rating system to identify what you perceive to be strengths and areas to develop in your approach.

Step 2 Collect information

Different methods can be used to gather parent carer and pupil views about the school's existing or proposed approach to homework/home learning. These may include:

- Surveying parent carers and gaining pupil views on home learning.
- Establishing a working group of parent carers, pupils and staff to carry out a survey or hold meetings to establish their views.

Key questions should centre around:

How well does the school already communicate it's approaches to home learning?

- What they already do to support and extend their child's learning at home, both in terms of 'set' learning from the school and other ad hoc learning that takes place.
- Any additional support and information from the school they would find useful to support their child's learning. This enables the school to develop a good understanding of what parent carers want and need from the school in order for successful partnership working to take place.

Step 3 Collate information

Bring together both the outcomes from the school audit and the views collected from parent carers and look at where there are consistencies in the evaluations of practice (e.g. areas that you, as school, have RAG rated red or amber and whether these correspond with the feedback you have collected from parents).

Consider:

- What the priorities might be to provide clearer, more specific information and improve communication links with for parent carers?
- Whether there are any specific issues or support needs for some parent carers or children e.g. those with SEND and/or barriers to learning
- What resources may be available to support learning at home, for example, subject refresher workshops or family learning courses.



Step 4 Implement and review

Whilst not a statutory requirement, consider using the outcomes from steps 1 and 2 above to draft/re-draft a homework/home learning policy.

- Identify the actions required to implement the policy successfully.
- Inform and consult with all parent carers and pupils.
- Agree when the policy and actions will be reviewed and evaluated to assess the difference it has made to parent carers and pupils.



Homework/home learning audit

Questions:			
How does the school define homework/home learning? Is this clearly articulated and understood by all stakeholders including the staff, pupils and parent carers?			
Do pupils and parent carers a clear purpose for homework/home learning? E.g. to inform parent carers about the learning taking place in school; to build, enthusiasm for learning; to take advantage of additional resources and learning opportunities in the home/community; to bring outside learning back into the classroom to share; to rehearse key skills such as metacognition and self-regulation.			
Does the school encourage and acknowledge the parent carers contribution to the pupil's homework/home learning outside school?			
Are there systems in place which allow a two-way conversation about homework (e.g home learning logs or planners?) Are these systems robust, yet simple and easy to understand and manage?			
Do you have strategies to support those parent carers who are less engaged in home learning to better understand their own needs (as well as their responsibilities) and provide encouragement and to support to seek better levels of engagement?			
Is the homework/home learning predominantly designed to consolidate learning (existing knowledge/skills)?			
Is the homework/home learning predominantly designed to extend pupils' learning (new knowledge/skills)?			
Do you manage to effectively communicate with parent carers so they understand the purpose, time commitment and expectations of the homework/home learning? Remember, this may be different for 'routine' homework and more ad hoc home learning.			
Have you set succinct guidelines, provided the necessary level of background information and resources to help the parent carers assist their children with homework/home learning?			
Is homework/home learning sufficiently adapted to take account of typical gaps in knowledge or skills that certain learners may have, or to support pupils who have additional learning needs?			
Do you factor in the resources and facilities available to less advantaged pupils or those who have SEN? Do you consider what resources and equipment are available in the home to support learning including digital devices and basic learning resources such as pens, pencils, paper?			
Do you respond quickly and effectively to the pupil's homework when it is handed in?			
Do parent carers ever see your responses to completed homework?			

Questions:			
How does the school promote, celebrate and sensitively praise the completion of homework/home learning in class?			
Is the school's approach to unfinished homework/home learning clear and consistent?			
Do you have a range of support strategies in place if a pupil cannot consistently engage with homework/home learning?			
Is provision made at school for pupils who may not be able to do homework/engage with home learning at home?			
Is the impact of homework/home learning on pupil achievement regularly evaluated, taking into account the views of a range of stakeholder groups? Are changes to systems and approaches to home/learning implemented to take account of feedback?			

Key	
	Never/No/priority area for development
	Sometimes/some strategies in place
	Always/Yes/strategies in place

Support for learning toolkit

Resource

Creating a support for learning toolkit for parent carers.

Purpose

Schools should aim to ensure that parent carers understand that the level and type of support for learning changes as the learner matures. This resource supports schools in developing "toolkits" to guide parent carers to understand these changes and, in some cases, the challenges they bring to supporting learning effectively.

As well as providing subject-based support and guidance on generic or individual pieces of home learning, settings may find it useful to provide parent carers with an overview summary of the evidence based research, as well as the school's own knowledge of the contextual learning of its pupils. This will include the most useful practices, strategies and approaches parent carers can be implementing in the home to support their child's developing needs.

Who will be involved?

School leaders, teachers

Step 1

Use the summary and the example toolkit identified below to help you develop your own 'support for learning toolkit' which shows how parent carers can ensure they are providing the right level and type of support for their child's learning at the right time.

The examples below are designed to be starters only and are not exhaustive. Educational settings will need to ensure that the toolkit best reflect contextual needs, understanding that the typical lived experiences of pupils in your setting will heavily influence and shape the type and level of support for learning.

Both the summary and examples are based on the following resource:

'Theme 4: Helping families to actively support their child's learning, Resources 1-5" which comes from the Welsh Government's "FaCE the challenge together: Family and community engagement toolkit for schools in Wales"(2016).

The full resource can be accessed here: https://gov.wales/family-and-community-engagement-toolkit-helping-families-support-their-childs-learning

Step 2

Share your toolkit with parent carers.

Remember, the toolkit may need to be further adapted to support specific or additional needs of both learners and their families.

Step 3

Evaluate and monitor the impact of your toolkit by taking feedback from parent carers, perhaps at parent's evenings, on which elements they found most/least useful and which they felt were having the greatest/least impact on their ability to support the learning needs of their child.

Step 4

Periodically review your toolkit to ensure it best reflects the ever-changing needs of your learners and their families and update where necessary.

Example: Support for learning toolkit

	Summary	Examples of the most effective ways in which families can support children and young people to learn during this phase of education include:
Early Years	The Home Learning Environment (HLE) has a large impact on children's. It is therefore important for schools to promote opportunities for learning that occur in the home. It is vital for early years practitioners to work positively with parent carers. That way, they can help to improve their children's HLE. Research shows that where parent carers spend time playing, having conversations and reading with their children it has a cumulative impact.	(see pages 5 and 6 of 'Theme 4: Helping families to actively support their child's learning, Resources 1-5', signposted above) • conversations that encourage children's natural inquisitiveness and love of learning while also developing language and communication skills • play, including role play, to encourage purposeful talk • reading stories, talking about the pictures • teaching songs and nursery rhymes • playing with letters and numbers, pointing out numbers and shapes around them • painting and drawing • developing one-to-one correspondence • visiting the library, museums and galleries • outdoor trips to parks, woods, beaches • supporting social and emotional learning • helping their child to be 'ready to learn' when they start in the reception year at school.

Primary	Between the ages of 5 and 11, a child's educational attainment, cognitive, social and emotional development still depends in large part on their HLE and the degree of parental involvement in their learning. It's not who parent carers are, but what they do, that matters. As children age, many parent carers begin to feel that they can't help, because the subject-specific knowledge and understanding required to complete home learning tasks becomes increasingly complex; but what's important isn't their subject knowledge but that they take an interest in what children are doing and learning.	(see pages 15 and 16 of 'Theme 4: Helping families to actively support their child's learning, Resources 1-5', signposted above) • showing interest in school and school activities • communicating the value of education and helping children to feel that they belong in the school • ensuring that they go to bed at a regular time, have breakfast and attend school • spending 10 minutes a day reading with the child – any text, anywhere using opportunities in daily life to use numbers and talk about "how big/much/many" • outings to the museum, library and art galleries and extracurricular activities • working with the school to support the child with any particular issues • supporting social and emotional learning.
Secondary	It is sometimes assumed that neither parent carers nor learners are interested in families being particularly involved in the child's learning during secondary school. However, research indicates that this is not actually the case. Furthermore, there is evidence that increasing family engagement with learning can lead to higher student achievement and uptake of post-16 education. Families may face more challenges in supporting learning through secondary school than primary school, as their children gain greater autonomy, the curriculum is more complex, learners have more than one teacher, schools are larger and usually further from home, and parents/carers come into the school building less frequently. However, effective family engagement isn't necessarily about knowing or understanding the answers needed for a home learning task. Instead it is much more concerned with showing an interest and providing background support.	(see page 25 of 'Theme 4: Helping families to actively support their child's learning, Resources 1-5', signposted above) • taking an interest in the topics followed at school • communicating the value of education, modelling respectful relationships with teachers and helping their child feel that they belong in the school • keeping them focused on learning and homework, while also supporting their autonomy • ensuring that they go to bed at a regular time, have breakfast and attend school • communicating aspirations and celebrating achievements – powerful motivators for children at this age • providing an environment at home in which they can study (with no distractions) • encouraging children to read, including reading to keep up to date with news • involving children in household tasks, such as how to understand bills and plan trips or plan spending/saving • outings to museums, arts and cultural venues • extracurricular activities, such as sports, creative and cultural activities, that help them to apply their knowledge and develop social and emotional skills.

COVID-19 support resources from the education endowment foundation

Resource

Covid-19 Support Resources from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/eef-support-for-schools/covid-19-resources/support-resources-for-schools/

Purpose

In response to unprecedented closure of schools to most pupils during the Covid-19 pandemic, the EEF produced a set of resources designed to be used by schools and parent carers to support home learning and maximise the impact of work set. These were all based on the evidence-based recommendations of the EEF's guidance reports.

Whilst some of the content of the resources is specific to the Covid-19 context, much of it is universally applicable to support successful learning in the home. For schools, there are helpful planning prompts and other practical tools. There are also useful resources for schools to share with parent carers who are looking to support their child's learning, from establishing home learning routines to shared reading help, to handy tips for supporting maths in the home for younger children.

Who will be involved?

School leaders, teaching staff, parent carers

Step 1

Access the support resources from the EEF webpage, link above. Consider both the support resources for schools and the support resources to share with parents.

Ask the following questions:

- Which of these resources are confined to the Covid-19 context only and are therefore of limited use going forward?
- Which of these resources are useful, subject to some adaptations, to support ongoing successful learning in the home?
- Which of these resources have enduring relevance and can be used, without adaptations, to provide immediate support for learning in the home?

Step 2

Choose which of the support strategies and resources you need to focus on to best meet your individual schools aims and needs.

For example, is it a greater priority for you and your parent carers to focus on establishing effective home learning routines, or is it more important to ensure parent carers are helping develop reading skills?

Step 3

Critically review how you support parent carers with home learning.

Talk to parent carers who are less involved about what support they would find helpful.

Monitor and evaluate your approaches in relation to your defined aims.

Reading and maths programmes

Resource

Maths and reading programmes.

Purpose

There is evidence that family literacy and numeracy programmes, delivered by and within schools, can have a positive impact on both academic outcomes and learner confidence in the subject by:

- Helping parent carers support their child's learning in home and in the classroom
- Helping to engage parent carers in activities specifically designed to develop subject specific learning
- Upskilling parent carers in subject-specific teaching and learning strategies that are used within the setting and proven to be effective

Who will be involved?

Pupils, Parent carers, Teachers

Step 1 Choose your subject and activity

- Choose a subject and year group on which to focus which is most relevant to your contextual needs, for example you may have a school improvement focus on developing maths in the early years.
- Investigate programmes/resources/strategies/ approaches which involve the active engagement of parent carers through in-school sessions, are evidence based, time limited and have, at their heart, a fun and engaging approach to learning.
- Plan carefully for group-based parenting initiatives. A convenient time and location, face-to-face recruitment, trusting relationships and an informal, welcoming environment are the most important factors for parent carers to attend group sessions and achieve success.

Tip: The EEF regularly reports on completed, active and promising high potential projects to help build a picture of what works. These can be accessed on the following weblink, where users can filter projects to identify those which may help inform selection of the best programmes/resources/strategies and approaches to meet school needs around engaging parent carers in reading and maths programmes: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/

Step 2 Information sharing and training

Ensure school staff receive training on the programme or approaches to be used and give personal invitations to parent carers to attend an informal meeting about the programme, where they are well-briefed on the content, format and objectives of the programme.

Step 3 Implement activity

Run the programme at your setting.

Step 4 Assess Impact

- Evaluate the impact of the programme on both the parent carers and the children who have taken part.
- What impact has the course had on subject specific learning? Can we identify any positive impact on attainment and progress?
- What other positive impact has the course had on learners? Confidence? Self-esteem? Enjoyment of learning?

Everyone ready for school

Resource

Everyone Ready for School (National Literacy Trust) https://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/everyone-ready-school/

Purpose

"The aim of this programme is to promote ready children, ready families and ready schools" (National Literacy Trust)

The 'Everyone Ready for School' programme is a six-week transition project designed to be used with families of nursery age children due to start reception in your school. It is particularly aimed at families of disadvantaged children and aims to build a partnership with parent carers to ensure the best start in school for their children.

Who will be involved?

Parent carers and their children
School senior leadership team
Teachers and support staff
Feeder nursery staff

Step 1

Contact the National Literacy Trust to sign up to initial training.

Once this is completed, all resources will be released for you to use.

Step 2

Work together with feeder nurseries to establish which families would benefit most from this programme.

Although, this is primarily designed for use with disadvantaged families, it can be used as a transition project for the whole cohort.

Step 3

Plan the programme, including dates, resources, staffing, space. Identify how you will monitor and evaluate impact.

If finances allow, it is recommended that each child gets a copy of the book you share as part of the programme. Schools can also facilitate a 'take home' item each week that are either made together or shown to parent carers as some ideas for use, such as mini treasure boxes, crayons, bubbles.

Step 4

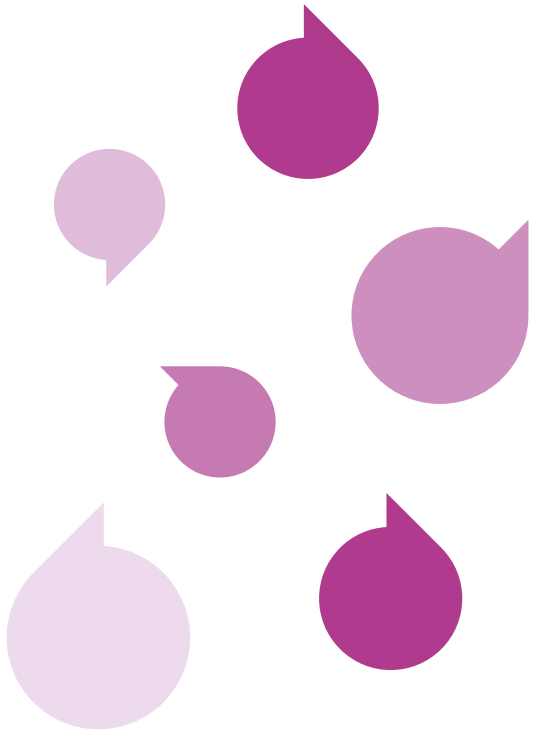
Invite families.

Keep in touch with nurseries to get their support in encouraging families to attend.

Step 5

Run the sessions.

Consider how to keep in touch with these families over the summer, such as post cards or an invitation to an event in September.



Family learning

Resource

Family Learning (through Cornwall Council Adult and Community Education)

Purpose

'Family learning' refers to any learning activity that involves both children and adult family members, where learning outcomes are intended for both, and that contributes to a culture of learning in the family.

Family learning programmes vary in length and make up but generally include adult-only time, where parent carers will work on their skills needs – which could include literacy and numeracy. They are often in a context as varied as family history or wildlife; children-only time, a chance for teachers to work with children on particular aspects of their development; and also time for adults and children to work together, learning together, modelling behaviour and learning how best to support child development.

Who will be involved?

Family learning tutors, school staff, parent carers, pupils.

Step 1

Use the Family learning website below to investigate what's on offer in your area:

https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/schools-and-education/adult-and-community-education/family-learning/

The family learning offer from Cornwall Council's Adult and Community Education Service involves the delivery of free courses in schools, children's centres and other community venues across Cornwall during the day. Sessions are usually 2 hours in length and courses might be short (3-5 weeks) or longer (up to 10 weeks).

Courses are designed to help parent carers understand the school curriculum, support their child's learning and meet other people in a similar situation. Topics may include supporting reading, phonics, how to encourage writing, computer skills, mental arithmetic strategies and written calculations in maths. Tutors work flexibly to meet the needs of the group and the school/ partner they are working with.

Further resources are available on the website to support schools/parent carers to understand more about:

- the impact of family learning
- the full scope of what's available in your local area

If you are a school who would like to host a family learning course, speak to a family learning tutor about how this can be facilitated and what commitment of time and resources is required from the school to support delivery of the course.

Step 2

Host a family learning course at your setting, ensuring you have informed parents/carers of the opportunity and promoted it to secure good take up.

Step 3

Evaluate the impact of the family learning course on both the parent carers and the children who have taken part.

- What impact has the course had on subject specific learning? Can we identify any positive impact on attainment and progress?
- What other positive impact has the course had on learners? Confidence? Self-esteem? Enjoyment of learning?

Rethinking parents' evenings

Resource

Re-thinking parents' evenings

References in this resource are made to the following document:

'Theme 3: Welcoming families to engage with the school, Resources 1-9' which comes from the Welsh Government's "FaCE the challenge together: Family and community engagement toolkit for schools in Wales"(2016).

The full resource can be downloaded here: **https://gov.wales/family-and-community-engagement-toolkit-welcoming-families-engage-school**

Purpose

Parents' evenings are an important part of engaging with families to report on educational attainment and progress towards outcomes. They can also serve to help families understand what they can do to actively support their child's learning. This includes identifying what parent carers want and need from the school to enable them to do so.

Crucially, they are one of the few opportunities to ensure a conversation can be tailored to suit the individual needs and context of a child and their family.

Unconscious bias often means that many settings have stuck to a traditional format for parents' evenings; however this resource encourages settings to consider whether changes to both the format and content of the meetings might help:

- secure higher levels of attendance (particularly from those families who would most benefit from attending the meeting).
- support better engagement with families which leads to a stronger, more positive relationship based on partnership.
- facilitate a better discussion around a learner's progress and involve the learner and their family in future goal setting.
- communicate the specific ways in which families can support their child's learning, bespoke to individual needs.
- work together to address particular issues.

Who will be involved?

Schools, parent carers

Step 1 Conduct a survey about parents'/carers evenings

A good starting point is to consider the content and format of existing arrangements for parent's evenings from a school perspective, but also the perceptions of parent carers. A survey could be used to gather information that can be used to make sure that parents' evenings are as useful and convenient as possible for families.

A good example is given on page 76 of the Welsh Government's FaCE resource, signposted opposite.

Step 2 Rethinking content

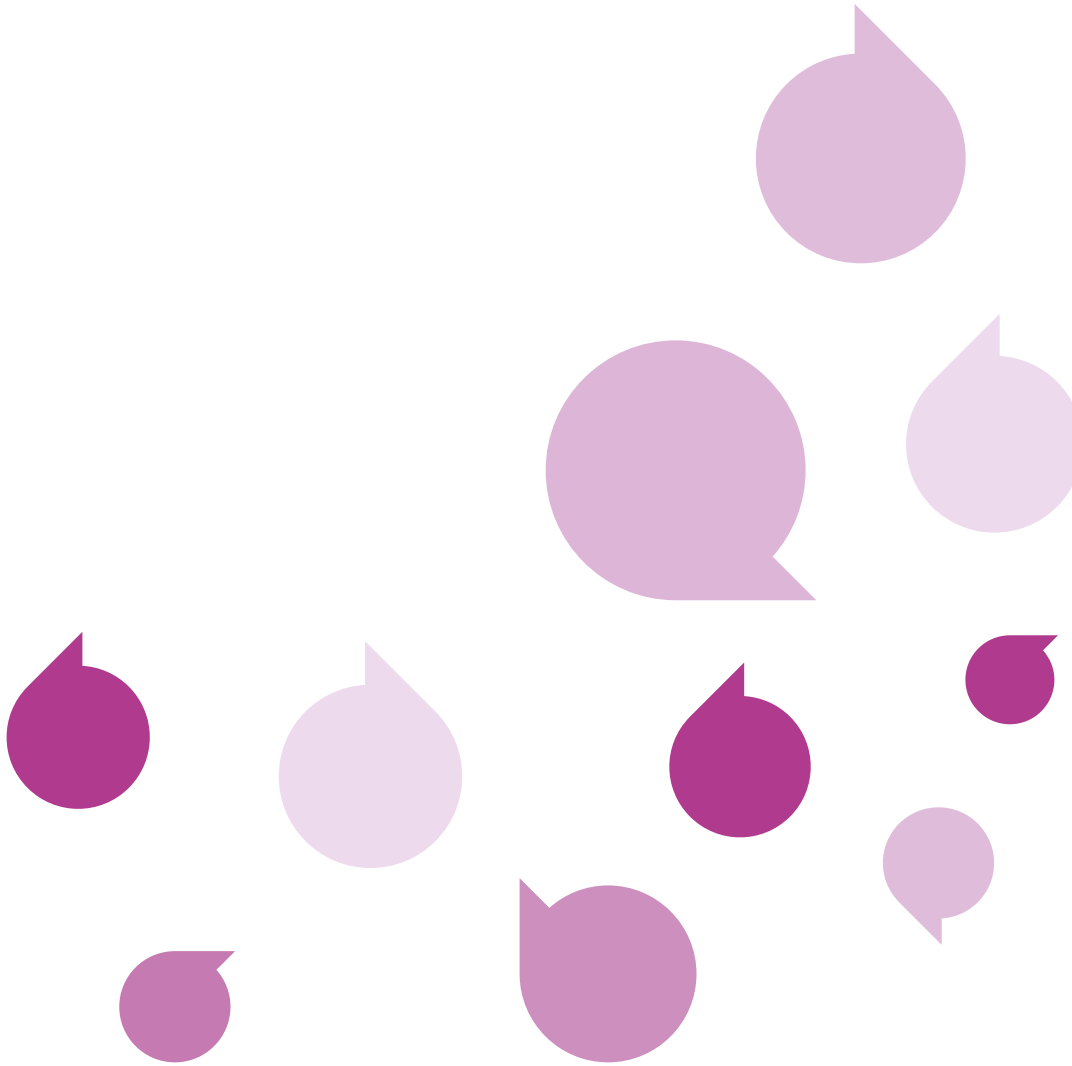
The content that you aim to cover at a parents' evening, and the way in which it is conveyed, will have an impact on the extent to which families feel engaged as partners in their child's learning and how effectively teachers are able to give and receive information back from families and information that can help teachers get a better understanding of the factors affecting an individual learner's progress

Use the prompts on page 69 of the Welsh Government's FaCE resource signposted opposite to help you think through the information exchange you want to achieve and whether any changes to your approach are necessary.

Step 3 Rethinking content

The way in which parent carer consultations are timetabled and located can make a big difference to how accessible they are to parents, as well as impacting on the content and depth of discussions that can take place. Many teachers report that it is the very families with whom a discussion is most needed that fail to turn up to parents' evenings, so re-thinking the approach may be required.

Use the prompts on page 72 of the Welsh Government's FaCE resource signposted previously to help you develop more effective approaches to the scheduling and format of parents' evenings, that can help secure good attendance and better discussion.



Systematic practice and formulation overview

Resource

Systemic practice and formulation

Purpose

This resource supports schools to understand 'the story' of a pupil and is particularly useful for supporting those pupils with social emotional mental health (SEMH) needs.

This is a collaborative process between the parent carer and school. It aims to understand the difficulties a child is presenting with and hypothesise about how to meet their needs.

As defined by the Anna Freud Centre, creating systemic formulations is useful because:

- They lead to better understanding of a problem.
- They help in creating better-designed problem-solving suggestions.
- They are respectful of the often complex reasons why a problem has developed or is being maintained.
- They are sensitive to individual's apparent lack of ability to change or break free from a problem.
- They lead to more sustainable change.
- They are respectful of more than one person's contribution to a problem.
- They are good at supporting the creation of trusting relationships with children and parent carers.
- When reviewed and developed over time, they help to guide direction and progress.
- They help in deciding what to prioritise.

https://www.annafreud.org/

Who will be involved?

Parent carer
Senior leadership team
Teachers (or other trusted adults, such as Designated Safeguarding Leads or Parent Support Advisor)

Step 1

Understand the theory of systemic formulation, through training, reading and resources.

Firstly, attend the Anna Freud Centre training on developing partnerships with parent carers to construct a family systemic understanding of their child and formulate a joint action plan to help. All on Board: Parental and Carer Engagement in support of Inclusion | Training | Anna Freud Centre

The training aims to support inclusion and reintegration by:

- Increasing the capacity of mainstream and alternative provision (AP) staff to deal with complex need.
- Providing a means by which school staff can create a systemic formulation for children at risk of exclusion.
- Creating a structure to communicate formulation-driven targets to teachers and teaching assistants.
- Stimulating positive and functional engagement with parent carers and the wider family.
- Providing a range of contexts to create change in parent carer engagement and understanding of their child's difficulties.

- Giving schools the opportunity to reflect on the complex web of professional provision and resources around mental health and inclusion and hone a coherent approach.
- Bridging the gap between the language used by education professionals and mental health professionals to describe their practice with children.
- Developing consistency of approach between communities of schools.

Once you have attended the training, the Anna Freud Centre will release some further resources to support your education setting. The Anna Freud Centre also provides a range information readily available online https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/engaging-with-all-parents-and-carers/

"Exploring your mind" is a good overview that includes some background and theory in systemic practice.

https://exploringyourmind.com/everything-need-to-know-systemic-therapy/

Step 2

Establish which families would benefit from systemic practice and formulation and consider which trusted adult would be the right person to complete this.

Step 3

Explain the process and benefits to the parent carer. This needs their 'buy in'. The best results are when open and honest discussions can take place. It is only by knowing the true story of a pupil that we can begin to understand how we can support them.

Step 4

Set up the initial meeting with the parent carer. Ensure there is enough time available to conduct it, in a space that is confidential. Keep 'touching base' with them about the meeting, ensuring they are comfortable with it.

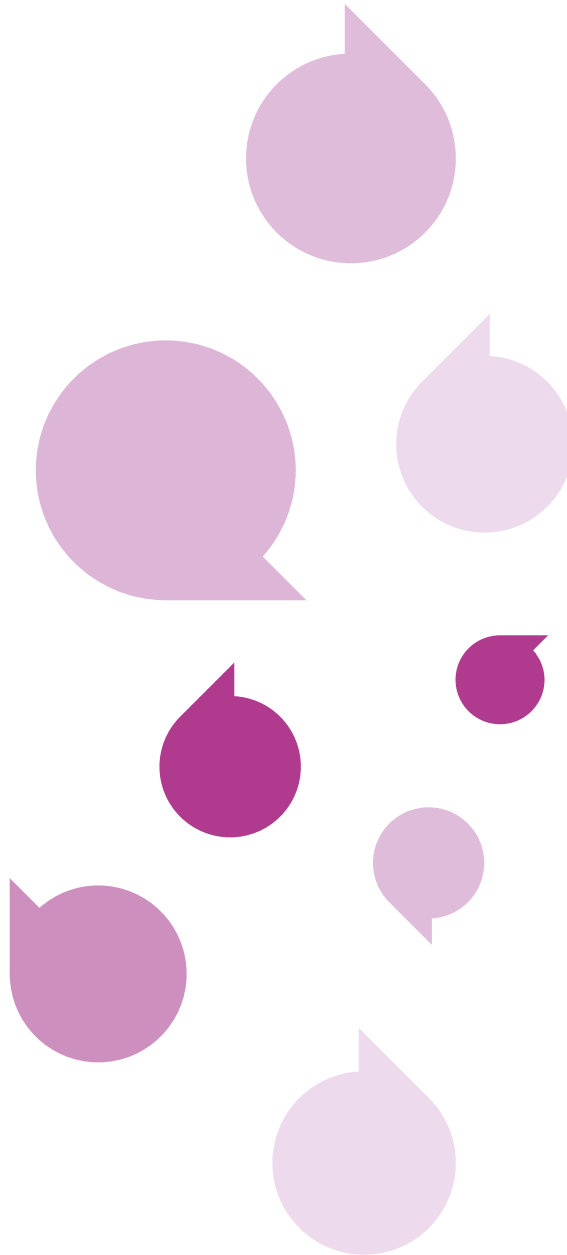
Step 5

- Complete the initial meeting.
- Complete a written copy of the agreed systemic formulation.
- This 'story' and plan is agreed to be shared with other members of staff in 'team pupil'.
- Keep reviewing progress with the parent carer, pupil and staff.

How do you measure impact?

Positive impact of systemic formulation can be seen in several ways:

- An ongoing positive relationship with the parent carer enabling shared working and consistency.
- Reduce potential dysregulation in pupils, enabling them to feel more safe and secure in their environment.
- In the longer term, this should reflect in academic progress as the pupils are more ready to learn.



Systemic formulation case study - Pondhu Primary School

Focus

To engage parent carers in developing systemic formulations for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. This shared 'pupil story' aims to support pupils to be successful and happy in school, finding ways to overcome their challenges.

Context

Pondhu Primary is a single form entry school, are part of Cornwall Education Learning Trust. It serves an area of significant depravation and has a higher than average number of pupils with SEND.

Many families are 'hard to reach', having had negative experiences of school themselves. The school recognises the increased success for pupils, where we can work in trusted partnership with parent carers.

Approach

Over the last couple of years, we have developed our nurture provision within school in order to support the needs of all our pupils, but especially those with SEMH difficulties and those at risk of exclusion.

Our pupils now have secure, trusting relationships with a number of staff in school and we are starting to see great success in the pupils' abilities to regulate and be successful in school.

However, during this time we have often discussed how we are only 'scratching the surface' for these pupils in terms of our knowledge of how they have got to the point they currently are. Without fully understanding their lived experiences, we are only tackling observed behaviours, without really understanding where these behaviours are coming from. We knew we needed to get more information from parent carers but weren't sure how to do this most effectively.

> **'We work tirelessly to build positive, trusting relationships with our pupils and see such a positive impact of this. However, this is only part of the story. In order to have the greatest impact, we recognise the importance of working with parent carers too and systemic formulation has given us a clear structure to guide this process.'**
>
> Reception/year 1 teacher

At this point, the school mental health lead attended the 'All on Board' training, led by the Anna Freud Centre. It was during this that the systemic formulation model was discussed, and resources provided to be able to lead on this with parent carers. This was followed up by a 1:1 virtual session with the headteacher of 'The family school' to discuss ideas for implementing this and reflect on further suggestions that might be useful in our setting.

We then felt ready to start using the principles of systemic formulation with parents. To begin with the mental health lead in school conducted these meetings. We began this process by just working with two families. Both pupils were experiencing significant difficulties in regulating their emotions in school and were at risk of exclusion.

After the initial meeting, the formulations were agreed. These were shared with class staff and the nurture team. In both cases, they opened up the understanding of the lived experiences of those pupils and helped to make sense of their reactions and difficulties.

We continue to 'check in' with these parents regularly. The trust continues to build and there is a real sense of 'being in this together' to get the best possible outcomes for their child.

Impact

Whilst this way of working with parents is only in its infancy at Pondhu, the positive impact has been immediate.

We are now tackling the things that underpin the behaviours we see, with a true and full understanding of the lived experiences that have led the pupil to this point. The children are being successful in school. We are able to work alongside them, supporting co-regulation. We have a better understanding of their triggers and are confident in our responses as part of 'team pupil'.

The parents we have worked with, now trust us to be working alongside them, with no judgement, just understanding and a genuine passion to help their child become the very best they can be.

The parents themselves, are becoming advocates of this process, encouraging others to 'share their story'. They are keen to get involved with more training at school.

These parents have not felt strong or brave enough to engage with external agencies to explore their own trauma. By starting with the needs of their child, it has helped them to see how they can begin to understand their own reactions.

Key learning

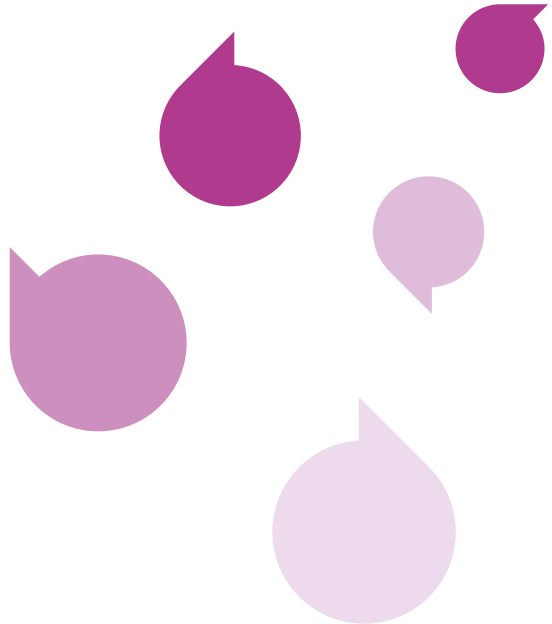
- Build the relationship first. These are tricky conversations and need to be based on mutual trust. Parents have opened up more where they have spoken to a member of staff they know well.
- Give these meetings enough time. Once you start the conversation, you want to be able to get to the end of 'the story' without rushing. You also need enough time to agree the plan.
- The stories our families have shared are heart breaking. Staff have felt the emotional impact of hearing these stories, as well as the joy that someone has trusted them with this information. Make sure a supervision model of support is in place for these members of staff.
- Staff feel more confident in our approach for these pupils. Now they understand their story, they see why we respond with warmth and nurture, within clear, firm boundaries.

'I wasn't sure what to expect. I know R's behaviour is really bad at the moment and thought this might be my fault. Now I can see why she reacts the way she does sometimes. It's good to have some ideas about what I can do to help her at home, and I know school understand her more.'

A parent

Next steps

- Train more staff to be confident in the use of systemic formulation (focused initially on the nurture and pastoral team).
- Consider how to ensure parent carers don't feel like they have to keep re-telling their story to new staff.
- Consider partnership working with external agencies. If parents who previously haven't engaged with parenting courses or counselling are feeling comfortable and more confident in school, how can we bring this together?
- Consider the use of shared training opportunities for staff and parent carer related to mental health and wellbeing. Begin to develop 'Multi-Family Groups' that can support each other.



Resources

Principle 5: Community matters

- **Community events overview**
- **Community events - engaging with your community**
- **Youth social action toolkit overview**
- **Devoran Primary School: a case study**



Community events overview

Resource
Community Events

Purpose
Strong links and involvement with your community can be beneficial to all social relationships both within and outside the school gates. Community involvement can complement and enhance existing and new initiatives, it can empower individuals to develop greater satisfaction and engagement, improve attitudes and morale (Higgins et al., 2005).

This document provides schools with ideas to engage community activities to build and develop lasting relationships.

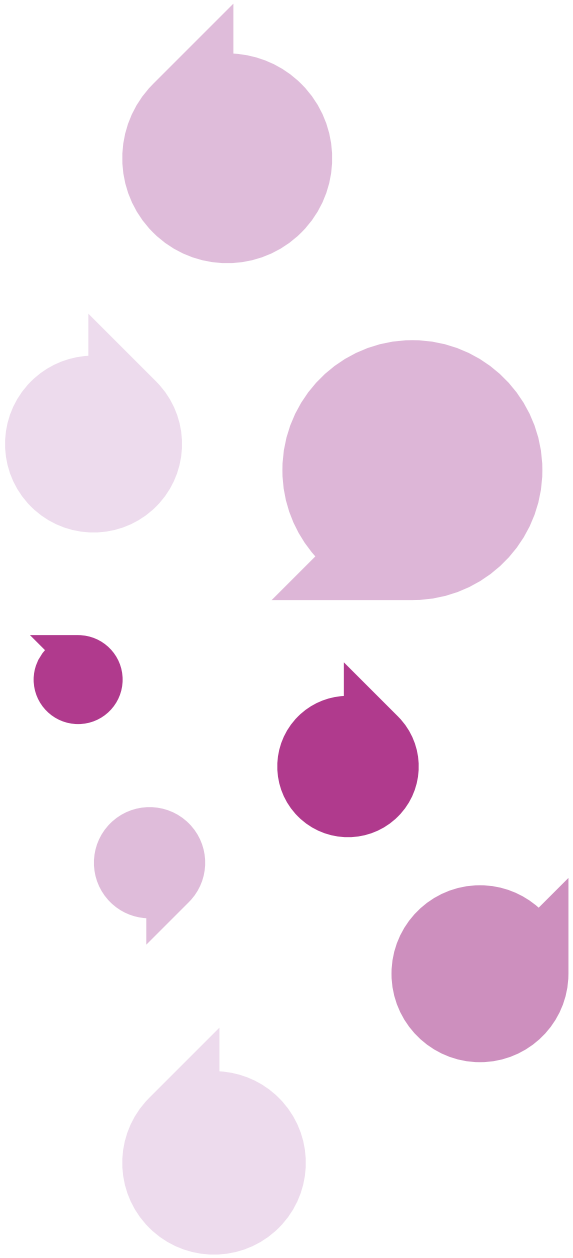
Who will be involved?
Staff, parent carers, pupils, employers and community groups. Town councillors, MPs can also support promotion of any initiatives.

Step 1
Read through the document to find activities or events that would work or be adapted for your school.

Step 2
Select an idea or ideas that will form the basis of a strategy for implementation as part of the school improvement plan.

Step 3
Identify the outcomes, actions and resource implications.

Step 4
Implement and evaluate the strategy. If successful, identify ways in which it can become an integral part of the school's way of working.



Community events - engaging with your community

This document provides schools with some suggested community activities. Supporting documents have also been provided to help with project management of any activities.

Utilising tools such as https://www.letslocalise.co.uk/ can support community events (see Devoran Primary School case study).

1/ Run a social action project

This could be led by your parent carer or student ambassadors. There are lots of examples within the following toolkit that could be utilised. Examples here.

2/ Engage through play

Outdoor activities and pursuits are evidenced as being effective for building relationships and breaking down barriers (British Psychological Society, 2020). Through play, schools are able to provide fun and engaging events for parent carers to take part in. For example,

a. Cornwall Outdoors or **https://www.swlakestrust.org.uk/** provide watersports and camping activities that rely of team effort and trust whilst being outdoors.
b. It's a knockout - **https://www.itsaknockout.net/**
c. Aquaparks, **https://www.ariaresorts.co.uk/our-resorts/cornwall/retallack-resort-spa/watersports/aqua-park/** or **https://www.adrenalinquarry.co.uk/aquapark/**

Settings should be aware of cost implications and select activities accordingly.

3/ Family fun day or festival

Some key considerations when planning the event:-

- Reach out to your school's business community to ask for their advice and input into running a family festival. Could they provide the school with time and resources, or donate a service or product to support the day?
- Work with your local MP or Town Councillor to help you to facilitate and promote the event.
- Allow a minimum of six months to plan and implement – the longer the better. Use any communications evaluation to decide the best day of the week to run the event.
- Ensure you have clear aims and objectives for the event; this will help the planning process. Involve the local community to plan and deliver the event with you – give them clear guidance on your aims for the event and this will help them to plan appropriately. Ensure you have a good communications plan. Consider using a local organisation to help with this.
- Provide a good reason to encourage parent carers to attend; How will it benefit them? Why should they come?
- Invite a local band to play live music throughout the day.
- Invite local food and craft stalls.

Ask local apprenticeship and university providers to bring some of the latest technology (i.e. Esports, 3D Headsets, Robotics, and others) to engage with young people (and parents!).

- Make careers guidance staff available to parent carers and students if they wish to discuss any personal learning journeys or pathways.

4/ Come dine with me

- Utilise school kitchen facilities and students to prepare, cook and serve a dinner inviting parent carers and siblings to attend.
- Engage with the local tourism community to help support the event with food and advice.
- Invite a keynote speaker to introduce the event (somebody relatable to your audience).
- Ensure there is literature and support for parent carers that attend. For example, provide education or employment opportunities that could be promoted at the event.
- Ask parent carers to share their story about education; ask if they'd like to present something.
- Invite alumni to talk about their own personal journey.
- Potentially make it an invitation only event so that the school can target specific families (suggest a criteria-based approach e.g. free school meals).

5/ Shared learning experiences

Engage with your local business community to support with any shared learning experience for parent carers, students and families.

Examples such as family art club, family cooking night, family quiz night, family games night.

6/ Offsite events

Consider that the school building itself can prevent parent carers with engaging in community events. Look for other meeting venues such as community centres, local pubs etc. Somewhere that is a 'safe' ground to engage with an activity or event.

7/ Parent podcast

Utilise free online tools such as Podbean.com to host a parent carer podcast.

The parent ambassador scheme could develop and deliver this activity (see principle 7).

8/ Community library and computer suite

Utilise the school library and open it up to the wider community.

For safeguarding purposes, the scheduling of this will need to be considered.

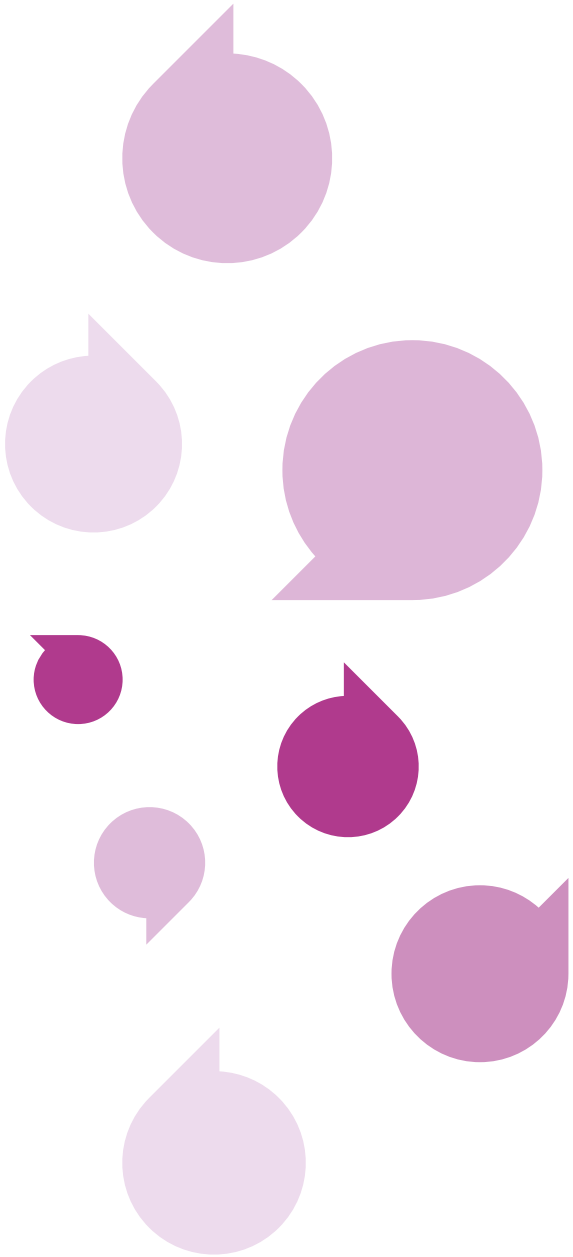
Allow a small computer suite and offer support with access IT and the internet.

9/ Community lunch

This type of event helps us to build bridges with the wider community, encourages students to be better connected to elderly relatives and fosters better communication and employability skills.

Some key considerations for hosting a community lunch:-

- Students design invites and take them to an older relative or neighbour; the school could invite groups from local day services and residential homes within the school catchment area.
- The students help design the format of the event including the decorations and entertainment.
- Students set up the venue, welcome guests as they arrive and serve drinks to tables as well as sitting down to eat the meal with their guests; especially important if they have invited someone directly.
- The school's catering team provide a meal and afterwards arrange for the school music or drama group to provide some form of entertainment.
- The event finishes with a word of encouragement and thanks from one of the school's senior leaders as hot drinks are served.
- The students escort guests to their transport; the school provide a small token from the day such as a Christmas card that has been designed by one of the students and or Christmas decorations made by the students.



Youth social action toolkit

Resource

Youth social action toolkit

https://www.youth-social-action.careersandenterprise.co.uk/careers-leaders-toolkit/leading-youth-social-action-session-your-colleagues

The Power of the Volunteer (Video)

This toolkit is provided by the Careers and Enterprise Company and includes case studies, videos and other resources that can target all stakeholders.

There are six principles embedded within the toolkit:

- Reflective
- Challenging
- Youth led
- Socially impactful
- Progressive
- Embedded

This project could be led by a school parent ambassador (see principle 7) in liaison with the senior leadership teams at the school. Support from the careers lead at the school is important.

Purpose

Youth social action refers to activities that young people do to make a positive difference to others or the environment. There are lots of ways in which young people can take practical action to make a positive difference.

Whilst the resource is developed with young people in mind, this toolkit provides a valuable resource for parent carers too. It is a community agenda and parent carers are at the heart of the school community. The toolkit provides a shared learning experience between the teachers, students and parent carers.

The toolkit includes a **whole staff session** on youth social action in your school or college. Use the **interactive survey tool** to gain insight into the youth social action activities that have already taken place over the last twelve months, and that are planned for the next year to analyse and reflect on their survey responses.

The frameworks identified below can support young people in preparing for and reflecting on youth social action.

Guided preparation framework
This framework supports social action by providing questions around identifying challenges, perceptions and appropriate responses.

Guided reflection framework
Like the preparation framework this resource provides questions for teachers/parents/students to use for their reflections from any social action project.

Who will be involved?

Parent carer; student ambassadors, careers lead, governors, senior leaders.

Step 1

* NB the steps below are not designed to be in consecutive order but suggestions as to how you might use the tool.
Read and download the contents of the toolkit. Utilise the kit to develop your own strategy. Hold a meeting with parent ambassadors and the careers lead at the school to develop a framework relevant to the school's own development and to develop a way to measure impact. Then engage with young people and invite them to consult on what their views are.

It's a good idea to set realistic and achievable targets in the beginning and utilise what has been learnt from a new project to inform future projects.

Utilise the case studies and examples of what other schools and colleges are already doing to provide you with ideas on how to develop within your local context.

https://www.youth-social-action.careersandenterprise.co.uk/examples-youth-social-action

https://www.youth-social-action.careersandenterprise.co.uk/youth-social-action-practice

Step 2

Once you have a good idea of the types of social action projects the school wish to pursue, organise a staff briefing, utilising the presentations within the toolkit. This is to develop a whole school approach that can help to expand on the ideas and include more buy in across the school community.

Step 3

Develop a network of volunteers (parent carers, teachers and students). A social media campaign is a good way of doing this. You could utilise the youth ambassadors to create a short film (30 seconds is an optimum time) for social media and to place on the school website. You could also utilise tools such as the **https://www.letslocalise.co.uk/** to develop and advertise local action projects.

Deliver an induction utilising the preparation framework within the toolkit before commencing on any specific projects.



Parent carer case study – Devoran Primary School

Focus

To develop the school's links with the community in order to draw on the experience and expertise in the local area to provide our children with enrichment opportunities as well as first-hand experiences.

Context

Devoran is a one form entry school that moved to a new purpose-built site in 2007. We strive to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, whilst also securing the fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics. We understand how an ambitious curriculum for all can have a profound impact on the development of pupils. We pride ourselves on providing our children with enrichment opportunities, through educational visits and extra-curricular activities that are vital in allowing them to explore and nurture new interests.

Over the past four years we have worked hard to build our links with the community which has included working on our parent carer engagement. Last year we were successful in being awarded with the Opus Leading Parent Partnership Award.

Devoran School has enjoyed taking part in community events such as village hall's 'meet and eat' events; work with Carne to Cove theatre and music events; setting up afternoon clubs' involving the local community for example the gardening club as well as playing an active role with the annual Devoran Flower Show, church and pre-school. We run highly effective transitions with our nurseries and pre-school settings which directly supports the children in our care.

> **"Being a village community school, it is so important to reach out to our local community and raise our children to look out for those around them as well as learning and sharing expertise with one another. The inter-generational work has been integral in showing our children how every interaction can make a difference and we all have a part to play in this."**
>
> Victoria Lock - Headteacher

Approach

Over the past year we have made links with LetsLocalise and Healthy Ageing Through Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) through which we have explored improving our links with the local community:

LetsLocalise
Bringing Schools and Local Communities Closer

https://youtu.be/pk-HzqWZdJM

LetsLocalise is a multi-sided digital platform that aims to offer schools across the UK a one-stop-shop solution for their community related needs. The platform is built on a business model, that enables them to offer free services to any type of schools, without joining fees or monthly charges. Any school can sign up with LetsLocalise and the only commitment required is to carry on with the work already started around community building. It does not add to the workload of school staff, but it helps doing things differently, more efficiently.

With LetsLocalise schools receive a unique opportunity to strengthen their links with their local communities, businesses and broaden their reach at the same time. This happens through bringing together various community related activities, such as entertainment events, volunteering opportunities, resource requests, fundraising and even more.

Being a digital platform, there are no boundaries for extending the range of features that support schools. LetsLocalise has recently updated their ever-popular Expert Time feature, bringing experts like Joe Foster, (Reebok founder) to meet your students virtually. They have also introduced features such as the online School Shop, that helps simplifying any sales activities, that would happen in school. From ticket sales for a film night through second hand uniform shops to organising school enterprise shops. All digital, all cashless, all traceable via a wide variety of reports. One platform is for schools, parent carer groups, individual and business supporters.

HAIRE

https://www.interreg2seas.eu/en/HAIRE

HAIRE is part funded by EU Interreg Programme and Feock Parish Council, January 2020 - September 2022. There are 8 pilot sites throughout Europe – 2 in the UK (including Feock Parish). The project is working in association with the University of Exeter and the University of Plymouth.

The aim of HAIRE is to design and deliver services that support older adults; develop solutions to reduce loneliness, improve quality of life, health and wellbeing for local people, building connections and links within the community to support one another, creating an intergenerational approach to improve health and wellbeing.

Impact

The impact for the school for both of these resources is that we have built better links with our families and the local community involving them more in our school events.

Despite the challenges schools have all faced over the past twenty months, we feel like we have improved our connection with our local community and found ways to involve them more with school life. We have reached out to our families and the wider community to ask them to share their expertise for things like enrichment after school clubs, links with topics and curriculum areas as well as finding ways to include our children more in community events – all of which are possible through the LetsLocalise platform. This helps us to prepare our children for life outside of Devoran School as well as supporting them in raising their self-esteem and self-worth by providing them with opportunities to perform / share learning with a supportive audience.

Devoran School's highlights – Let'sLocalise

- Four community engagement events over the period of four months – quiz, bingo, enterprise shop, raffle.
- A total of over 26,000 minutes recorded community engagement time – based on the number of participants during (online) events and scheduled event times.
- 174 registered followers (173 individuals + 1 business) on the community focused LetsLocalise platform for the 205 students, resulting in an amazing 85% student/follower ratio.
- During this short period of time over £2,000 raised for the school.
- Heavily involved Parent Teacher Community Association (PTCA) - school and PTCA clearly dividing responsibilities as in:
    - School is looking after any activities where the school itself and/or students are involved (e.g. Enterprise Shop).
    - PTCA works closely with school on activities, that involves the parent and wider community (e.g. online entertainments, fundraising).

Key learning

We have learnt that linking with families and the wider community is certainly a two-way process. The community get a lot from getting involved, as does the school. There are direct links to mental health and wellbeing for everyone involved and we know that the inter-generational project with HAIRE will be of great benefit to our children as they learn from members of the local community as well as imparting their learning on them.

We want to ensure that our links with the local community continue – especially as things start to open up more and more and we will be able to invite visitors into school. This will help us to increase the enrichment opportunities that we have on offer for the children whilst also supporting the members of our community who may be feeling isolated and would benefit from sharing their knowledge with the next generation.

Next steps

Our next steps will be to commence a 'memory shanty' project in conjunction with HAIRE to share the stories from members of our community in song. The idea is that these are then put into sound benches around the local area for all to enjoy.

We also hope that the meet and eat lunches will recommence, giving our children opportunities to perform in front of a friendly audience.

We would like to set up more community events via Let's Localise to enhance our curriculum and enrichment opportunities to draw on that expertise with the children to help bring their learning to life.

Resources

Principle 6: Raising and realising aspirations



- **Engaging parent carers in aspirations and careers learning through a five-step practical approach**

Engaging parent carers in aspirations and careers learning

Resource

This resource provides a range of tried and tested strategies together with high-quality resources that education settings can use to make their aspirations and careers learning work meaningful. It can be adapted to meet the needs of schools/college priorities and the context of local employment and labour market opportunities.

Purpose

The key purpose is to help the Careers Leader in school/college to think strategically about the intent behind their delivery, signpost the best resources to support implementation and encourage forward action planning based on the feedback and barriers to engagement parent carers share.

Overview

A five step practical guide to help teachers plan, deliver and evaluate their aspirations and careers learning strategies in with a focus on engaging parent carers.

Who will be involved?

The staff member who leads on student progression, careers or skills development will lead on this work, supported by wider staff members.

Step 1

Identify your key priorities and set achievable goals. These will be driven by the context of your school/college, wider community, and your resource within the school. What are the issues and barriers for parent carers in supporting their children's aspirations and broadening their horizons? Work in small steps, try new things and test what works before embarking on large scale projects that require significant resource. Always set objectives to be clear about the change you want to see and review and evaluate in light of these. Think about.

Clarity: Choose what to do and what not to do; which initiatives will produce the result you want and take priority?

Focus: Where will you focus your efforts for impact to keep within the limits of your resources and time?

Alignment: How will you share your plans to ensure the whole school community supports your goal(s)?

Step 2

Explore the key resources below to help you develop and focus your plans. These are all free to access.

A) National Labour Market Information

Labour market information is important for social mobility and positive career. It allows children, young people, and their families to be more equipped to understand what is on offer in their region, and beyond, and how to get there. If you wish to help your pupils and parent carers understand opportunities across the UK these are good resources to explore and share.

- CareerPilot is an online resource designed for young people aged 11+ and their parent carers to explore jobs starting from their favourite subject, job sector or personal values. It is also very accessible for upper key stage 2 pupils if exploring with an adult and has a very useful 'Parent Zone' to explain options and pathways.
- The Careerometer is a fun widget you can install on your school webpage to provide instant labour market information (LMI) access for users. Once installed pupils/ parent carers can type a job role onto a 'card' to reveal salary, job availability, skills, attributes, and responsibilities. They can view a number of cards simultaneously to compare jobs.

- Careermag is an online employer insight, information, advice, and pathways magazine. It is published regularly with various editions tailored to support different audiences. Editions include Parent, Carers & Guardians, Primary Schools, Inclusion and School Leavers, among others.

B) Local Labour Market Information

Cornwall's labour market is buoyant and diverse and has some incredibly exciting growth sectors to boot which could deliver high paid, high skilled jobs for our children and young people. The picture of what is available locally now and in the near future is likely to be very different to what parent carers know and understand from their time leaving education/ entering the labour market; you may need to help them revise their assumptions about the opportunities available in order to help them support their children.

- Cornwall Opportunities is a website hosting accessible information on opportunities in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. You can explore Cornwall's 10 key growth industries (scroll down on each dedicated page to find labour market information in detailed and summarised versions), explore the careers directory, view live jobs, apprenticeships and courses and much more. Watch the introductory video here.
- The Careers Hub CIoS have produced an editable 'CIoS LMI Guide for Busy Teachers' power point to help teachers understand and share information around Cornwall's current labour market and economy (scroll down to the second item on the webpage). It also contains an annexe with guidance around effective employer engagement.
- Cornwall Council's Economy Hub produce a live Economy Report; helpful for any teachers wishing to take a more detailed look at economy and employment in their area to inform their focus on aspirations work with parents or raise awareness in staff training.
- The Careers Hub have produced a set of 'Future Careers in Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly' short films for young people and their families. These feature industries that will lead on our 'green revolution' in the coming years and offer high skilled, well-paid jobs. You can watch the films on Cornwall Opportunities here (scroll down to find the Tin Mining, Geothermal, Lithium and Offshore Wind titles).

C) Essential Skills

Essential skills are often misleadingly referred to as 'soft skills.' However, these skills are critical to local employers; they look for people who can evidence essential skills in communication, creative problem solving, self-management and collaboration. Highlighting these skills early on helps children, young people and their families understand how the skills they develop in school/college, clubs and at home can allow them to thrive in the future. A skills focus also helps support young people who are less academic to feel positive about transitions and future possibilities.

- Skills Builder Partnership's Homezone is an excellent online resource. It is designed to support parent carers and their children to develop eight essential skills through activities, challenges, reading and reflections. For parents who find helping with homework or revision daunting, this is a very achievable way for them to support their children's resilience and confidence. You can find a guided tour to share with parent carers here (5 minutes duration).

D) Pathways

Post-16 pathways can be difficult to navigate. However, it is helpful to make children, young people, and their families aware of both academic and vocational routes as early as the primary phase. Many young children and their parent carers will decide too early that aspiring to a higher-level qualification is 'not for them' because university is simply too expensive; signposting them to the range of academic, vocational, and work-based pathways to higher education can help them raise their aspirations and realise potential.

- The Next Steps Southwest (NSSW) website offers information on progression and access to higher education across Cornwall, Devon and Somerset through academic, vocational or work-based routes. They have a handy Parent Carer area with helpful resource links.
- The Devon and Cornwall Training Provider Network have launched a new website with pathways information suitable for parent carers and young people. There is a handy comparison of post-16 options here and more to explore.
- The Amazing Apprenticeships website has a wealth of information to help tackle misconceptions about apprenticeships and promote the benefits. They produce a monthly parent-carer pack which can be accessed here.

- You can find a comprehensive list of Post 16 pathway providers for SEND pupils on Cornwall Opportunities here. You can also access a series of 14 short films showcasing the local post 16 Education and Training offer for young people with an EHCP or SEND here. The films feature current SEND students and their teachers to allow parent carers and their children to explore local options.

E) Working with Parent Carers to Raise and Realise Aspirations

Below are two further resources which may support you to increase parent carer engagement with your aims for aspirations and careers at school.

- Talking Futures is an online parents' toolkit for careers conversations with their children. It is aimed at parent carers of young people aged 11+ but is very accessible and would be useful for families with children in upper primary. Signpost your parent carers to the interactive conversation cards here to get them started.
- And finally, on the flip side, do not forget that may of your parent carers will be employers or professionals who can potentially support your careers programme. Have a look at this Parent Pledge pack created by the 'Inspiring Worcestershire' team. Parents are encouraged to "Pledge" their support to help participate in specific activities or help the team increase careers related activities.

Step 3

Plan for change. Design your event or initiative based on your key priorities, chosen focus and level of resource within your school or college. Keep your objective(s) at the forefront of any initiative you launch and make it manageable in order to guarantee success and long-term sustainability. You might find it useful to create a **SMART** goal (is it **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imebound?) and/or project plan like the one below to keep the focus on the change you want to see, map out delivery and plan how you will measure success:

Issue/ Problem	Inputs	Deliverables	Implementation Outcomes	Overall Measurable Outcomes
What needs to change?	What are the essential, non-negotiables of the initiative?	What product, service, result or capability needs to be created, completed or achieved?	What is happening to demonstrate successful implementation?	How can you evaluate whether your goal has had the impact you intended?
			Mid Project: End Project:	1. What do you need to measure? 2. How can you measure that? 3. Who will need this data? 4. What will it be used for?

Step 4

Deliver and review your event or initiative.

'The most effective parental engagement strategies involve planning, collaboration and continuous improvement using parent feedback.'[i]

Where there is an attended event, collect parent carer feedback on the day (keep the time needed to complete the survey under 5 minutes). Once parent carers have left an event, the likelihood of receiving feedback diminishes greatly. Make sure your questions are specific enough to evaluate your original goal and inform future actions. It is advisable to have an open question at the end of a survey to invite any positive or constructive feedback that parent carers could not address in short response questions. For strategies delivered over a broader time period, you might wish to survey parent carers 'before and after' to achieve a comparative measure.

If you are getting started with surveys and/or evaluating the impact and success of your delivery these templates are a great starting point: Parental Engagement: Evaluating your delivery | CEC Resource Directory (careersandenterprise.co.uk)

Step Five

Share your story to celebrate what you have achieved and influence the people who can help you the most such as parents, governors, senior leaders, and employers. Every school has different digital and paper preferences for communicating news internally and externally and you may of course already be working on Principle 3: Communication to develop how you connect with your stakeholders. See our top tips below for sharing the impact of your careers and aspirations work:

- Name employers, professionals and organisations who have visited in newsletters and school/ college social media; they are always pleased to know their time and efforts are shared with families. It is good PR for their business and an incentive to return and do more for your school community.
- Use language strategically to start conversations at home: e.g., rather than writing 'Today we had a visit from Spaceport and the children learned about space minerals,' try 'Ask your child about our visitor from Spaceport - can they tell you a fact about minerals and how our visitor got into their job?'
- Highlight the impact pupil focused events have had to help parents become invested in the power of careers learning. What is it pupils now know, understand, or can do as a result of an employer project or engagement? Can what pupils have learnt feature in a parent assembly, presentation, or podcast?
- Save the date! Use the momentum and enthusiasm from parent focused initiatives to get engagement for forthcoming events: how can parent carers get involved again and what are the benefits for them and their children?
- Ask visiting employers if they have any specific resources they would like to share with parent carers. Helping families become better informed around a sector or role could give them the confidence to continue conversations and learning at home.
- Emphasise the prospect of career and skills development at any age and invite questions from parents about the local opportunities pupils have explored. Parents that can be curious, ambitious, and optimistic for themselves are more likely to inspire the same in their children.
- Ask for a platform to share your parent carer and pupil feedback with governors and senior leaders. What attitudes and beliefs have changed as a result of your initiative and how has this supported a key priority? What have you learned about parent carer concerns and issues around careers and aspirations and how can leadership support the success of your ongoing programme?

[i]Talking Futures Toolkit (2022): 1571 - Talking Futures toolkit v6.pdf (careersandenterprise.co.uk)

Resources

Principle 7: Addressing the barriers to parent carer engagement



- **Parent ambassador overview**
- **A parent ambassador rationale**
- **Barriers to parent carer engagement training overview**
- **Diamond 9 activity: Barriers to parent and carer engagement**
- **Overcoming barriers to parent carer engagement presentation**

Parent ambassador overview

Resource

A parent ambassador provides a voice for the school in the local community.

Purpose

A parent ambassador can be a bridge between your school and harder to reach families. Properly trained and supported a parent ambassador can promote positive and powerful messages on behalf of the school to their community. Because of their links with community groups and a shared sense of understanding parent ambassadors are uniquely placed to promote a schools ethos and values. Their role would include supporting initiatives within the school and developing community relationships.

These videos show effective use of parent ambassadors in schools. Please view so you gain understanding of this new and exciting role.
Parent Ambassadors - Bantock Primary School

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN_Q3dZ72Ps&t=35s

Who will be involved?

Senior leadership team, parent carers, students and governors.

Step 1

Read the rationale and organise a presentation for the head teacher and the governors.

Step 2

Consider a job application for the unique needs of your setting and community, for example shared language or ethnicity.

Step 3

Set a realistic timeline to advertise and recruit for the role and consider the short and long-term tasks to set them aligned the school's priorities and ethos.

Step 4

Arrange and organise relevant training and meetings to support the role.

Step 5

Ensure that the parent ambassador role is integral to the school staffing structure.

A parent ambassador rationale

What is a parent ambassador?

A parent ambassador can be a powerful resource for your school. They can promote positive and powerful messages to other parent carers and the community about your school. They support initiatives within your school, they can help to break down the barriers to engagement and develop community relationships. In some schools this means supporting families with educational and social outcomes.

A staged approach to a scheme

Settings will need to invest time and resources in the parent ambassador role to make it effective and integral to the work of the school. It should be aligned to the school's improvement plan, vision, mission and values.

Example vision statement

A parent ambassador is empowered to develop school and community relationships in order to support the school's vision, mission, and values.

Outcomes for the school

- The school should decide what the key outcomes are that they wish their parent ambassadors to achieve in their role both in terms of the relationships between school and home together with supporting school improvement priorities.
- Ensure the selection of a parent ambassador is carefully considered according to the local community and the experience and expertise the ambassador can bring to the role.
- Advertise your parent ambassador programme to your school community and ensure you explain the purpose and how to get involved.
- Host an initial meeting to launch the initiative setting out expectations.
- Once the parent ambassador has been selected, initial stages should include awareness raising of the role and continuing to develop relationships between home and school.
- Organise parent ambassador training to meet the outcomes of the role and the experience of the candidate.
- Connect with your parent ambassadors regularly.
- Ensure parents are kept up to date with important issues and strategic decisions.
- The school may wish to financially resource the parent ambassador scheme.

Outcomes for parent ambassadors

- To be the voice for the school in the local community.
- To review the effectiveness of the current parent carer engagement within the school and community.
- To effectively engage with parent carers across the whole school and community, and address barriers to engagement and act as a bridge for harder to reach families.
- To develop tailored communications that endorse a positive discourse within the school's community.
- Support the school to provide a welcoming environment in order to support a two-way relationship.
- Support the delivery of events and activities through evidenced based approaches to increase engagement and improve pupil outcomes.
- Attend appropriate training.
- Contribute to meetings sharing news and information.

Further information

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Barriers to parent carer engagement training overview

Resource

Barriers to parent carer engagement training material

Purpose

Through this resource staff within the setting can gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to parent carer engagement. There is an opportunity to explore some of the key challenges to engagement from a school and a parent carer perspective. Staff should also be given opportunities to explore possible strategies to overcome the barriers to engagement.

Who will be involved?

All staff; parent carers where appropriate

Step 1

Those delivering the training should draw on the references and information section of the toolkit to ensure they have a good understanding of the issues and literature. The presentation and training activities can be adapted to suit the context of the setting.

Step 2

Organise and deliver the training. Facilitate the diamond 9 activity and assess the commonality of issues. Staff to identify some potential solutions and strategies.

Identify at least two aspects that they will be done differently as a result of the training.

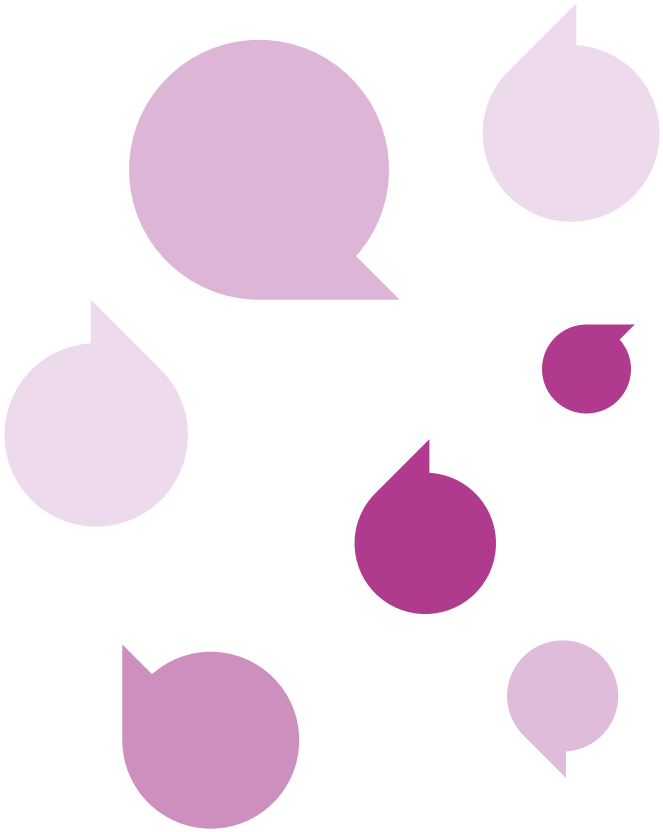
Step 3

The senior leadership to work with representation from parent carers to put together an action plan drawing on principle 2's planning for change. Use other relevant resources from the parent carer toolkit to inform the action plan. Be really clear what your success criteria and evidence.

Step 4

Implement and monitor the action plan.

Celebrate the success/progress and use this to further develop practice.



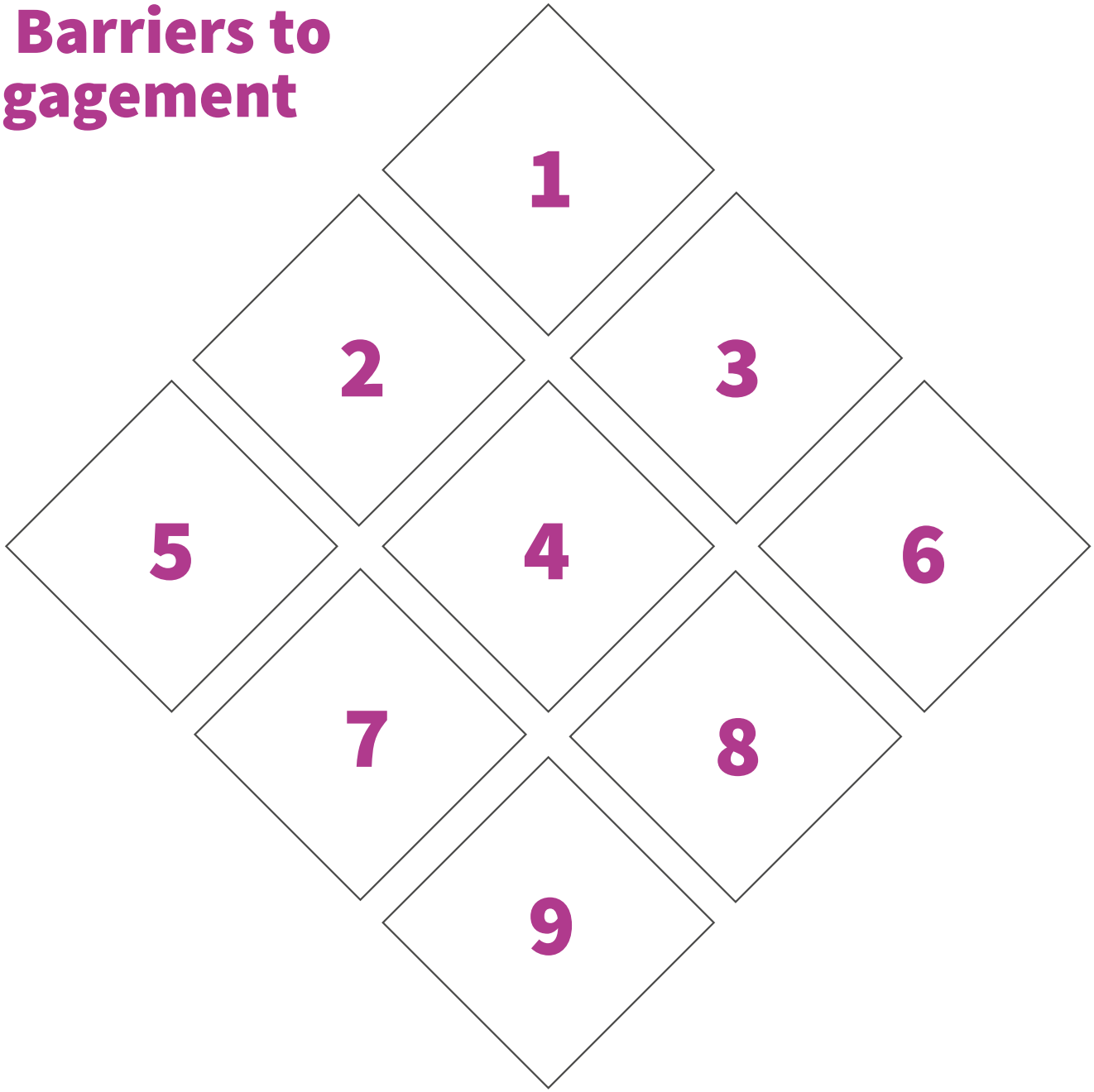
Diamond 9 activity: Barriers to parent and carer engagement

This tool can be used with the Diamond 9 baseboard in the Toolkit.

It stimulates discussion as colleagues rank the barriers in order of seriousness, with 1 at the top. Note that the barriers are not only created by the parent or carer but also by the school.

If you supply blank cards, or Post-its, the participants can add their own ideas of barriers. Encourage each group to share their three most serious barriers with the whole group.

In groups: Select the 9 cards most relevant to your school and place them in order of seriousness (1 is most serious) on the baseboard. Use post-its to identify possible solutions to your top 3.



Baseboard

Photocopy this onto A3 paper

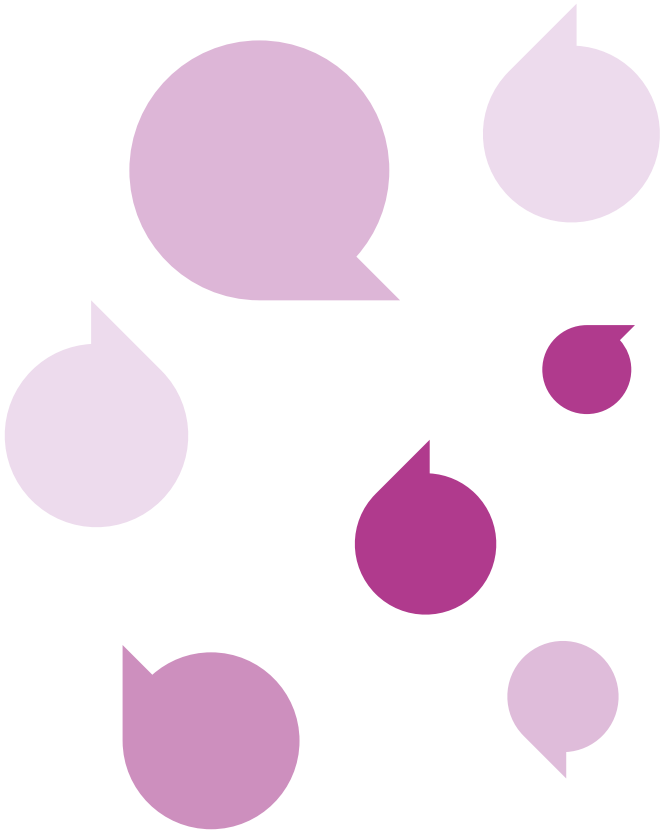
Parent carer is afraid or dislikes the school, based on their own poor experiences at school	Parent carer has distrust of teachers and authority	Parent carer appears indifferent to the aspirations and achievements of their child(ren)	Parent carer is overwhelmed by personal/home circumstances
Parent carer finds it hard to communication with the school	There is cultural dislocation between the school and the parent carer	Parent carer lacks basic skills or has their own learning difficulties	Parent carer is aggressive and hostile
The school appears 'closed' to Parent carers	Parent carer sees little or no value in educational success – or sees education as the school's job	Parent carer does not feel welcomed or respected by the school	Parent carer has limited time and/or difficulties attending school meetings
Parent carer wants to support child(ren) but does not know how	Parent carer lacks confidence in their own ability to work with the school or support their child	Parent carer has limited confidence in English, which is an additional language	Parent carer finds it hard to parent, and/or control their child(ren)

Overcoming barriers to parent carer engagement

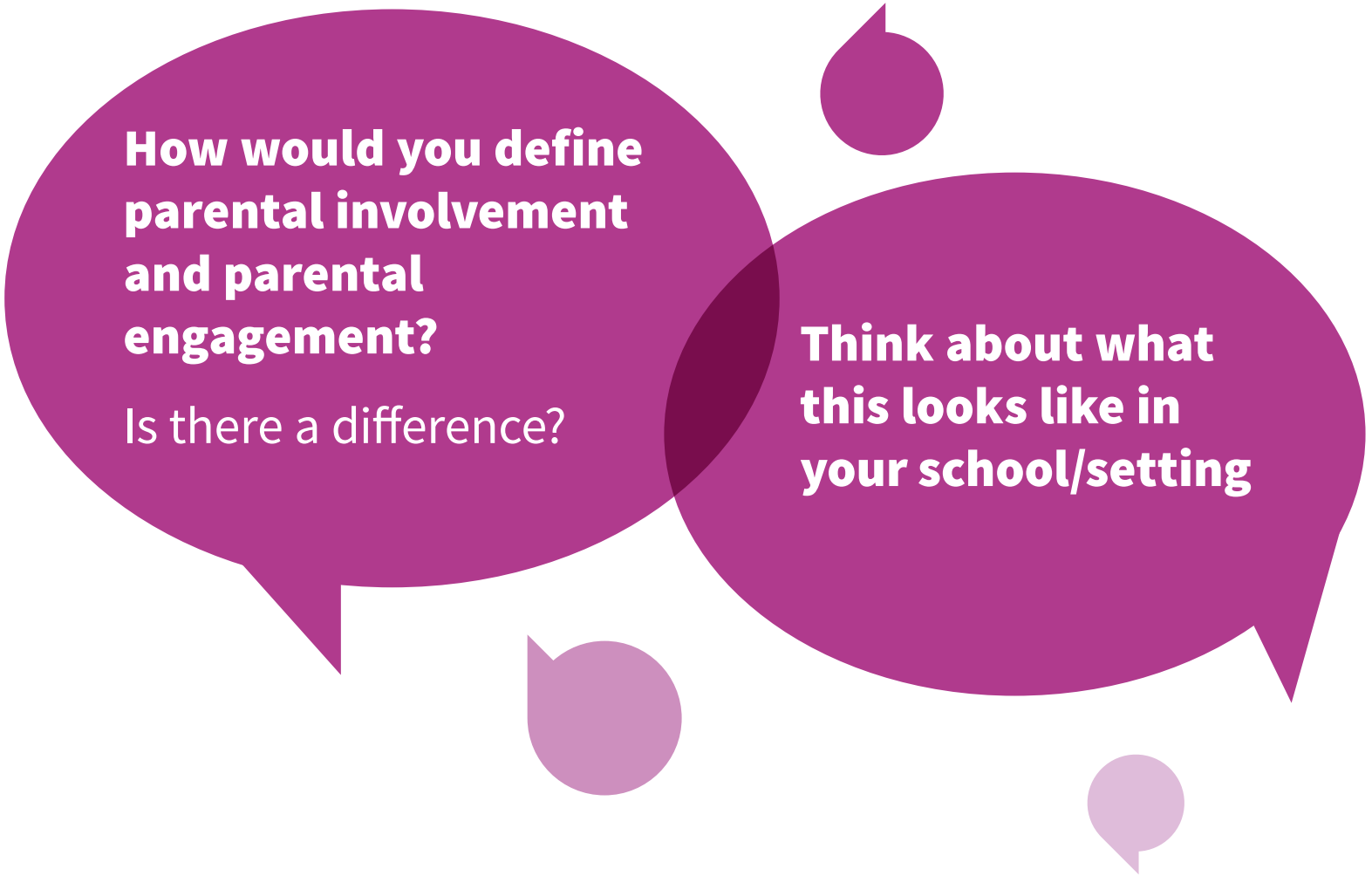


Learning outcomes

- You will have reflected on the importance of parent carer engagement as a whole school strategy to support pupil progress and achievement
- You will have identified some practical strategies to support parent carer engagement your school



Reflective task



Parental involvement and parental engagement

Parental involvement most often focuses on parents getting **involved in the life and work of the establishment.**



Parental engagement most often refers to parents' engagement in their child's **learning at home, at school, and in the wider community.**

The movement between the two represents a 'shift in emphasis, away from the relationship between parents and schools, to a **focus on the relationship between parents and their children's learning'**

(Goodall and Montgomery, 2014)

Parents carer engagement

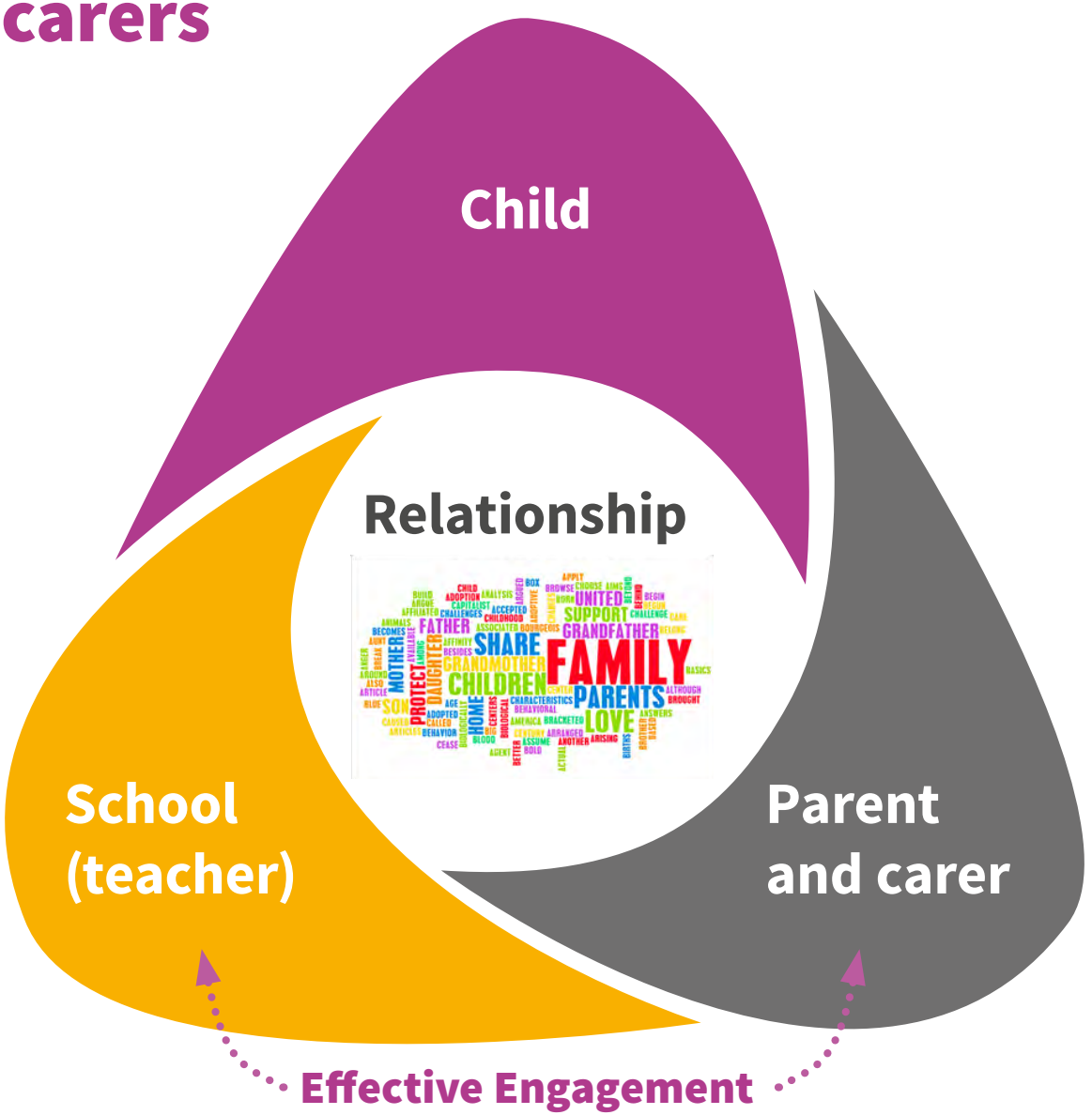
Parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's learning, and levels of parental engagement are consistently associated with children's academic outcomes. Schools and early years settings can support parents to engage with their children's learning in a wide range of ways, for example, by:

- Critically reviewing how they work with parents, to plan and monitor parental engagement activities
- Providing practical strategies to support learning at home
- Tailoring school communications to encourage a positive dialogue about learning, and;
- Offering more sustained and intensive support where it is needed.

Education Endowment Foundation (2019)



Parents and carers as the focus



Definition

Barriers to parental engagement are complex and multifaceted. Barriers could be social, cultural, physical, economic and/or time bound.

Through established processes and evaluation schools and colleges are able to identify and implement mechanisms to be able to support diverse and inclusive ways to bridge identified barriers.

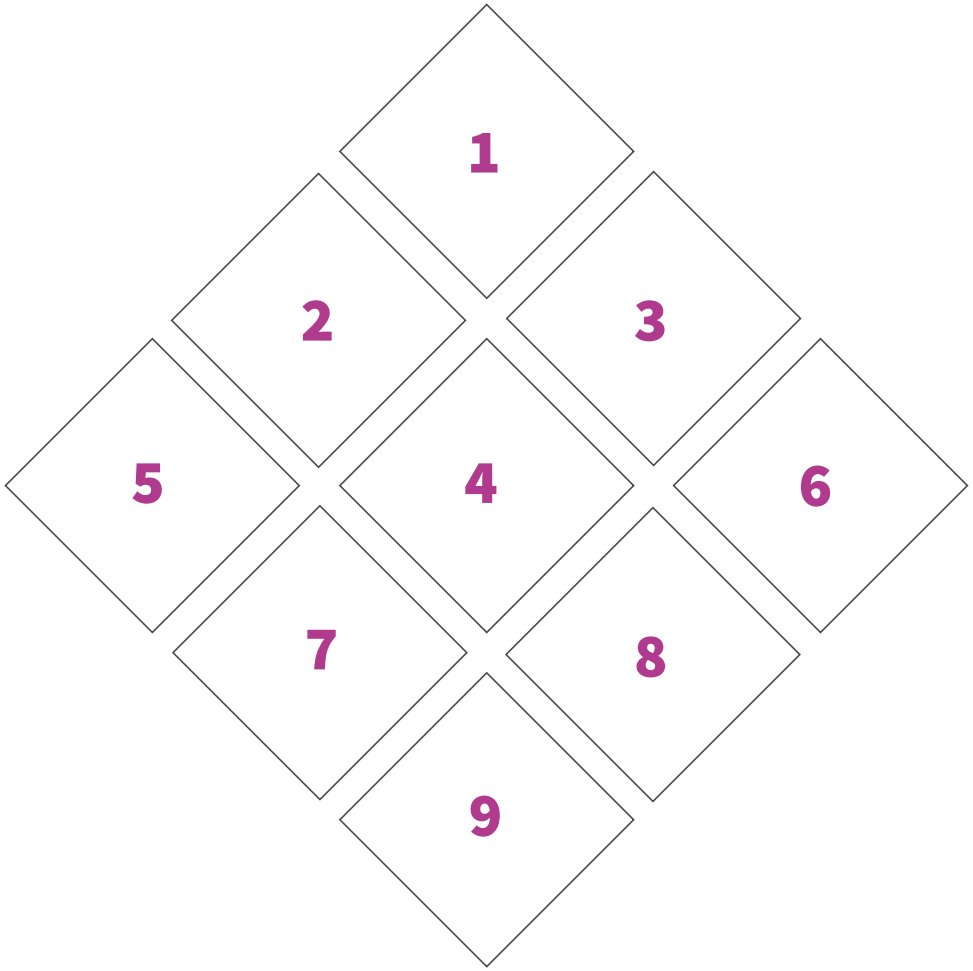
Barriers to engagement - Parent carers

Behavioural barriers; lack of trust due to previous experiences, readiness to change and parental expectations.
Delivery constraints; Issues with logistics including activity costs, transport, working hours and childcare availability
Cultural; considerations such as language barriers and lack of confidence in speaking or understanding English fluently
Social; lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills
Participant constraints; the school does not make them feel welcome or appropriate engagement strategies are not in place.

Barriers to engagement - School perspective

A 'bolt on' and periphery to the school improvement plan rather than a more holistic and sustained model.
Differing goals, agendas, attitudes and language used and that parents can be seen by schools as being problematic.
Role of deliverer; parents are the receivers of knowledge from them as the 'experts'.
Narrowing of school focus purely on pupil performance whereas parents value education in a much wider sense.
Lack of focused CPD. Staff need supporting in understanding the families they are working with and provided with better communication methods and styles.

Diamond 9 activity: barriers to parent carer engagement



Select the 9 barriers that are most relevant to the school. You can add your own barrier(s).

Use the cards and place them in order of seriousness onto the diamond nine (1 is most serious).

Look at your top 3. What are the solutions?

Engagement with parents and carers: top tips

Embeded parent carer engagement in your whole school strategy

"Listen to what we think - we don't want to always feel like we are fighting for our child"

"Remember that we're both working towards the same goal - to improve the outcomes for..."

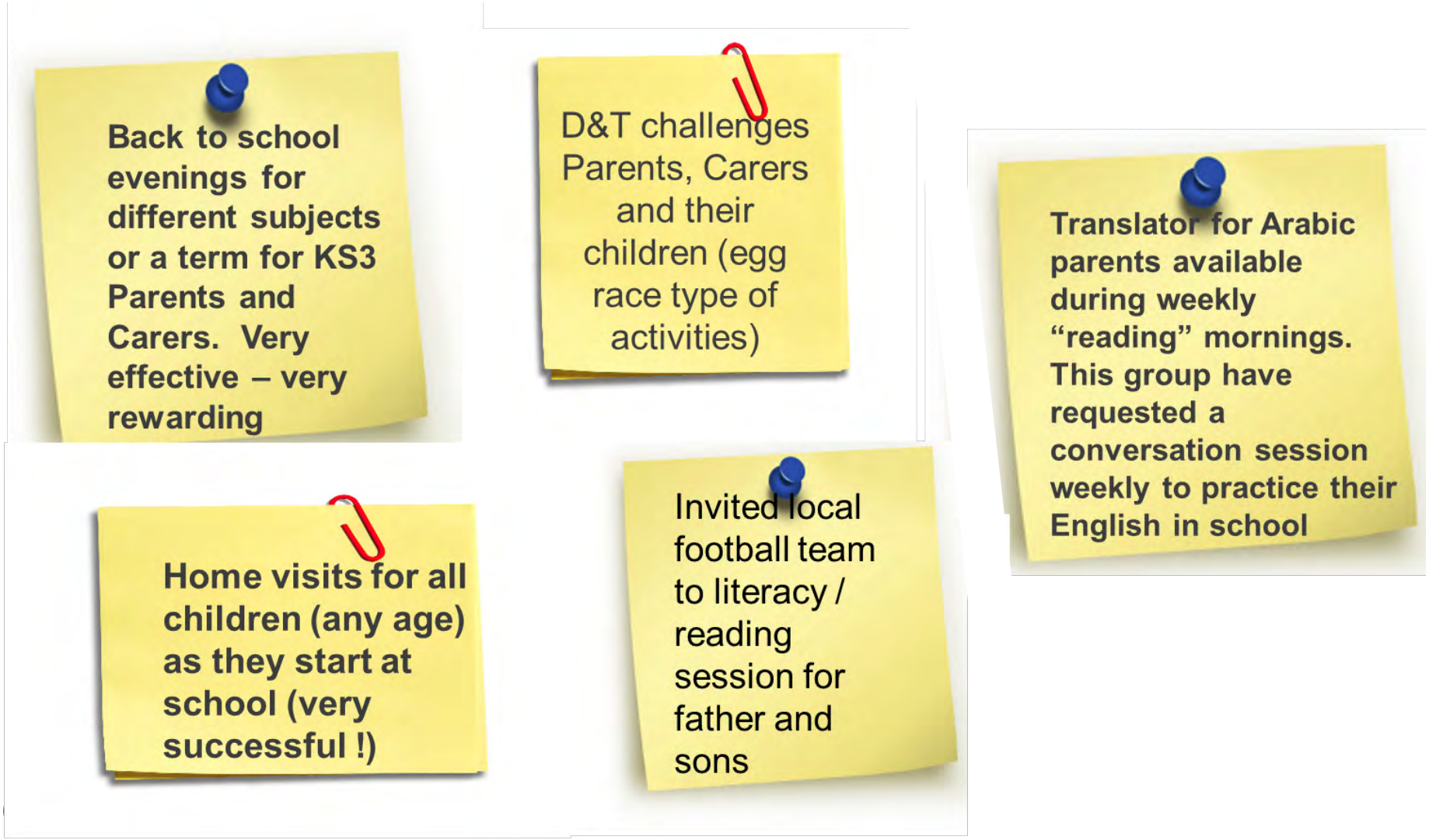
Parent carer engagement and participation is an ongoing process and relationship - not a one off consultation.

Make sure you have specific strategies to communicate with parent carers who have literacy difficulties or English as an additional language.

Parent engagement ideas



Hard to reach? Or scared to come?



Aspects identified by Ofsted in schools with excellent parent and carer engagement

- Engaging Parents and Carers in exam revision and study support
- Providing family learning activities
- Using home and school diaries or planners
- Discussing pupils' assessments and information about their targets with Parents and Carers
- Using websites, email and other electronic media, such as texting, to communicate quickly and effectively with Parents and Carers about curriculum and teaching matters as well as day-to-day information
- Consulting Parents and Carers on individual matters relating to the curriculum that their children follow.

What can you do?

Thinking about giving parent carers a voice choose one of the following key areas and generate some ideas about what you might do with the pupils you are currently working with.

- Communication
- Support for learning
- Community engagement



Planning for change

Reflecting on the outcomes from the session today, the school will put in a place a plan to develop parent carer engagement.



Perfect partners for student success

Section 6

Further information and resources



Achievement for All: The structured conversation

A handbook to support training (2009) Department for children, school and families.
https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2418/1/afa_struct_conv_hbook_0105609bkt_en.pdf

Anna Freud National Centre

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families Schools in Mind is a free network for education professionals which shares practical, academic and clinical expertise about mental health and wellbeing in schools and FE colleges.
https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/

Barnardo's

Offer a range of school-based interventions, including family support services, early years, specialist services for fostered and adopted children, children of offenders, young carers and more.
https://www.barnardos.org.uk/

The Bell Foundation

Provide guidance for schools and parents to support the learning pupils who use EAL.
https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/guidance/parental-involvement/

Campbell, C. (2011)

How to involve hard-to-reach parents: encouraging meaningful parental involvement with schools. Full research report. National College for School Leadership.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340369/how-to-involve-hard-to-reach-parents-full-report.pdf

Child2Child Conceptual Framework

This paper provides global considerations of school readiness which centre around three fundamental questions: Are all children entering school with the social and cognitive skills and competencies needed to achieve in school? Are schools equipped and ready to provide optimal learning environments for all children? Are families and communities ready to help their children make a smooth transition into school?
https://sites.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/Child2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf

Development Matters

Non-statutory guidance for the revised EYFS **Development Matters 2020 (development-matters.org.uk)** and associated book **http://development-matters.org.uk/download/103/**

The Fatherhood Institute

A short guide with tips and a checklist for engaging dads in parenting programmes which is available online at **FI 8284 Commissioning Father-Inclusive Parenting Programmes (fatherhoodinstitute.org)**

Headstart Kernow

Building resilience and mental wellbeing for children and young people. Information, resources and training for schools, pupils and parents.
https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/

This includes free access for parent / carers to the Creative Education platform featuring wellbeing resources for families.
https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/parents--carers/online-wb-courses/

Hungry Little Minds

In July 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) announced the government's ambition to halve in ten years the proportion of children who finish reception year without the communication, language and literacy skills they need to thrive. As part of this endeavour, DfE launched Hungry Little Minds – a new three-year campaign to encourage parents and carers to engage in activities that support their child's early learning and help set them up for school and beyond.
Hungry Little Minds – Simple fun, activities for kids aged 0 – 5 (campaign.gov.uk)
Hungry Little Minds Campaign Toolkit (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Improving the Home Learning Environment

Government guidance on Changing behaviour to help promote early language and literacy development through the home learning environment (HLE): **Improving the home learning environment - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**

Institute of Health Report

A paper which summarises evidence on school transitions to determine the nature of and extent of their impact on health outcomes. It also considers whether or not school transition interventions and strategies can help to reduce health inequalities
https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/improving-school-transitions-for-health-equity

NIACE 2013, Family Learning Works

This recognises that the best way to support children is to work with the whole family and emphasises preventative and early intervention, encouraging an overarching 'Team Around the Family' approach **https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/family_learning_works/family_learning_works_2013.pdf**

Ofsted and Parents

Guidance on the importance of involving parents to improve a settings teaching, students learning and the setting's Ofsted rating.
www.teachingtimes.com

Parent Carer Cornwall

Our aim is to gather information from parent carers and using these unique shared experiences, we take part in consultations and participation work which helps us to shape the development and delivery of services to our children. **https://parentcarerscornwall.org.uk/**

Parentkind

Bringing together home and school. A blueprint for parent friendly schools.**https://www.parentkind.org.uk/uploads/files/1/HR.Blueprint%20for%20Parent%20Friendly%20Schools%20spreads.pdf**

Bringing together home and school. A range of information and resources to support schools and parents to work in partnership.
https://www.parentkind.org.uk/

Parent Partnership in Education

Resource Roundup. A compiled list of articles, videos, and other resources to help you engage productively with your children's teachers and schools. **https://www.edutopia.org/parent-leadership-education-resources**

Peeple

Supporting parents and children together. A resource to provide training for practitioners to support parents, carers and children to learn together; to improve the home learning environment and build positive attachment relationships.
https://www.peeple.org.uk/

Rights Respecting Schools Award

The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) works with schools in the UK to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured and they are able to thrive. Our Rights Respecting Schools Award embeds these values in daily school life and gives children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens. The Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond.
https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/

Scottish Government

Scotland has produced many resources to support schools in setting up a parent council. The primary purpose of parent councils is to enable parent/carer voices to be heard in school decision making. Guidance can be found at **www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/08/09153454/9**

Statutory Framework for the Early Years

Information on the minimum standards required for all Early Years providers including nurseries, childminders and schools, with references to parent partnerships throughout the document:
Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (publishing.service.gov.uk)

STEP

A resource to help children and families from travelling communities to access relevant and flexible learning opportunities throughout their lives.
https://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/

Sussex Learning Network (2018) Beyond the School Gates

Mentoring support for excluded students and their families **Case studies - Sussex Learning Network**

The project carried out research to better understand why children and young people get excluded, and why some types of children are more likely to be excluded than others. It also aimed to make recommendations on what support and resources are needed by families to reintegrate excluded children back into the classroom.

Working with Parents Guidance Report

Four recommendations on working with parents to support their child's learning
Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF

Section 7

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https://www.nga.org.uk/getmedia/64b96dac-ba3f-41a7-a4a4-c858330aedb5/NGA-Parentkind-20pp-Guide-%28WEB-Aug-2019%29-AW.pdf

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https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-improvement-framework-parent-communication-plan/pages/1/

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https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/face-the-challenge-together-family-and-community-engagement-toolkit-for-schools-in-wales-main-guidance.pdf

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