

Parent Carer Engagement Framework

Case studies

In partnership with



This resource presents a sample of the case studies from the schools that have engaged with the Parental Engagement Framework in Cornwall, using it as the foundation on which to build their strategies and approaches to improving parent carers engagement.

Each of the schools has been supported to get the most out of the Framework by an advisor from Cornwall Council's Education Effectiveness team.

Over a 12 to 18-month period, schools implemented a planned approach to parental engagement focusing on one or two of the principles. Measuring impact is key to evaluating the success of the approach and the case study supports the methodology behind this: Schools draw on quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate impact within the case study and also reflect on their key learning from this work to inform next steps.

There are eight case studies presented in this resource which provide useful examples and experiences that other settings may learn from.

The first four case studies are from the pilot year, 2021-2022, at which time the nation was in the early stages of recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. These four case studies have recently added a "what happened next" section to demonstrate how they have continued their work on parental engagement using the Framework.

These schools are:


- 1. Devoran School**
- 2. Doubletrees School**
- 3. Penpol School**
- 4. Trewirgie Infants' and Nursery School**

The following four case studies were completed in 2024:

- 5. Carbeile Junior School**
- 6. Grampound Road Village CE School**
- 7. St Breock Primary School**
- 8. St Day and Carharrack Community School**



Devoran School

 We guarantee that children leave our care knowing that they have received the best and richest education, that they have continuously put in their best effort, and that they have developed a thirst for learning that they will take with them into their future studies and careers.

Context

Devoran School is a one form entry school that moved to a new purpose-built site in 2007. We are a Local Authority maintained school situated on the outskirts of Truro just off from the A39 - the commuter-belt between Truro and Falmouth. Over the past seven years, we have seen our catchment area increase significantly, now having children come from as far as Redruth, Penryn, Truro as well as more locally from Carnon Downs and Devoran itself.

We strive to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum; whilst also securing the fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics. We understand how foundation subjects can have a profound impact on the development of a transferable skill set that can be applied to a range of situations and learning opportunities. 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.

We are passionate about giving our children real life experiences and opportunities that enhance whilst also helping to connect with others as part of their educational journey. Our direct work with the Parent Engagement Framework has enabled us to focus on reconnecting after an incredibly challenging two years as we build back up 'bigger and stronger' putting children at the centre of all that we do and weaving the thread of cultural capital throughout our curriculum.

Focus

We focused on Principle 5 – Community matters and Principle 6 – Raising and realising aspiration from the Framework. We used a variety of approaches to foster innovation and engagement with families and our community over the period 2021-2022 including: -

- Activities, programmes, or events which offer a direct, personalised benefits to young people and their parents to help develop engagement and trust.
- Used mixed methods of delivery to create a shared careers -related experience for parents and their children.
- Redesigned existing activities to increase parental engagement.
- Design new interventions targeted to engage parents, employers, and the local community in new and meaningful ways.

Approach

Through our careful process of self-evaluation, we identified key areas linked to this project:

Quality of education

- More focus to be placed upon future learning and employments, including visits from people in the community.
- Consider how we evidence the progress in fluency and independence of our children with SEND.

Personal development

- To develop our enrichment opportunities for The Arts.

We used the audit from the parental engagement toolkit to ascertain which areas we wanted to focus on throughout this academic year and then looked carefully at the cohorts of children across the school. Through careful scrutiny of curriculum coverage, we were then able to signpost year groups to particular projects to enhance their learning opportunities whilst also engaging more with parents.

The projects were as follows:

Make my day project

‘Make My Day’ was written and designed by year 6 students at Devoran school to support other children’s well-being and ... make their day.

‘Make My Day’ was created during sessions run to promote well-being, enhance learning, and develop future skills – called Assets for Success. Whilst developing these skills, the students were asked to design a product that would help promote well-being in children. The products were presented to their parents and a panel aptly named ‘The Dragons Den.’ The parents enjoyed being a part of the project and were able to talk about the impact the project had on their children. The ‘icing on the cake’ was when one of our projects was able to go to print!

The programme was developed by Imagine If Partnership and facilitated by Community Connect Cornwall working with our school. It is part of a European Union project to enhance social and emotional learning and executive functioning skills.

Our children were then fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to speak at a conference in Granada (via Zoom) in which they were asked to share their experience and talk about the impact that this project has had on their lives in developing resilience and lifelong qualities.

Memory shanty

Our year five children have taken part in an intergenerational project working with the group Healthy Ageing Through Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) in which they have worked with local musicians to create a memory shanty project. They met with some local ‘elder’ members of

the community and listened to their stories. The children then worked with musicians to create shanties incorporating the memories. This project helped to bring the community and the school together to forge links between the generations whilst also giving the learning a purpose with a strong end project. The shanties have been recorded and installed onto a sound post that will be installed on the corner of an area of land that leads up to the school (near Carnon Downs Footpath). The idea is that then walkers, passers-by and members of the community can stop, press the button on the sound post and be transported back to a moment in time - it is an experience for the senses and gives people a moment of time for reflection.

After school clubs

We reached out to our parents to ask if anyone could help with our enrichment club provision that takes place throughout the week after school. We now have a number of parents who are now active volunteers within our school providing our children with more opportunities to access a variety of sports and other clubs.

Pen pal club

Again, linking with HAIRE one of our after-school clubs has been set up for our children to write to members of the community. They then receive letters back (they are double enveloped so content is always checked by an adult first) and it has been special to see the relationships develop and this will end with a physical visit with members of the community who have written to the children. Having spoken with the social navigator, this has really given isolated members of the community a boost and they have enjoyed having a positive focus and an impact on children’s lives.

Enterprise

Our year five children made their own coasters and placemats as part of their enterprise project in which they learn about money, budgeting, planning, and ordering. They then went to sell them at a local community fayre to raise money for their Goblin Greenpower Car. This project helped the children get out into the community. It also enabled parents to come in and help to also engage parents with the whole project.

Curriculum overviews

We have worked hard as a school to ensure that our curriculum overviews are on our website for parents to view so that they are aware what their child is learning each half term. We have received positive feedback from these and the parents feel more engaged with their child’s learning.

‘Source exhibition’ for Devoran School

In October 2021, an amazingly talented team of eight artists held an exhibition of their The Restronguet Creek inspired work at Devoran Village Hall called ‘Source’. So passionate about encouraging the younger generation, some of these artists later got together and organised a smaller exhibition of this work specifically for the children of Devoran School. Every class had the unique opportunity to visit the art ‘Source’ exhibition. The children were able to meet the artists, ask them questions, study their work, and even use their art sketch books to put their own creations onto paper.

Impact

The impact of creating these opportunities for our children is that parents are more involved in the school than ever before. We now offer a range of after school clubs – many that are now run by parent volunteers as they can see the positive impact that these opportunities have on their children.

Parents feel more engaged in their child's day to day learning as they know what their child is learning and can then start the conversations up around this.

The sporting opportunities that have opened up have also really supported the children in getting back out into the community, competing against other schools, and having a go at new skills.

We have seen improved parental engagement and the links with the community are really supporting us in giving all learning a 'real life purpose' that is tangible to the children. This has helped to improve engagement as well as demonstrating to our children that learning happens everywhere, not just in a classroom.

In our most recent Ofsted (September 2023), the parent view survey showed that 95% of parents agreed / strongly agreed that their child could take part in clubs and activities in school, with 93% of parents then agreeing / strongly agreeing that the school supports their child's wider personal development. 94% of parents stated that they would recommend Devoran School to another parent.

We sent out a series of parents surveys to our families. Here is a snapshot of the positive feedback we received:

What we are doing well?

Class dojo

"Fantastic updates on Class Dojo"

School ethos

"Creating a positive atmosphere in school, taking many measures which enable children to thrive academically, physically and emotionally/psychologically."

"Devoran is such a loving, caring community, both inside school and outside."

"Devoran School does well at the community aspect of bringing everyone together."

"Nice Friday Newsletter with all updates needed" and "Good communication via the newsletter."

Opportunities

"We are really appreciating the recent increased focus on organised sports, both in school and after school. Very many things are done very well - we are very appreciative of the recent tutoring, and the support and all-round school atmosphere and set up is wonderful."

Home-school learning.

"I am very grateful for the information on the children's planned learning for each half term, as it enables me to support my son's learning a lot more. I am also grateful for the extra encouragement and learning via Athletics and the reading schemes."

Transition from pre-school/nursery to Devoran School

"Amazing staff in Foundation, it is clear from how (my child) chats about school that she is learning lots and enjoys a good relationship with the staff. Love the use of class Dojo to see what they have been up to. Overall, cannot fault the degree of information given before the children start in Foundation and in the early stages. Very approachable staff, any issues get sorted promptly."

Wraparound care

"After school club is fantastic. All my kids love going! Emma is like my previous child minder - she is nurturing, kind & fun. She absolutely gets the ethos of after school club. What an asset she is!!"

We were then able to act on the 'Even Better If' comments and share updates with parents on how we were working on the themes that came out of the survey.



Key learning

These opportunities are powerful and an integral part of a child's learning career.

There are so many people within a local community who can offer support to schools – it is just finding ways to tap into them that is the hurdle!

In linking with the community, we have been able to demonstrate the importance of looking out for others to ensure that our children don't end up socially isolated in years to come.

Finding the time to have an overview of 'the school picture overall' is crucial in making this work. Sitting down, looking at the curriculum as a whole was crucial in looking at 'our offer' and what this looks like in our setting.

The safeguarding checks are very important; getting this across to parents and the older generation has taken time but has been crucial in enabling us to offer as much as we do within our setting.

What happened next

Since the completion of the case study in 2022, we have used the Parental Engagement Framework to further develop our links with the community and our engagement with parents. We have employed a Pastoral Lead to work in school to support our children and families whilst also delivering workshops such as SPACE (Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally) and Understanding Little Minds (amongst others). These workshops help to empower our families with an understanding of child development as well as supporting families in considering a range of strategies to support children in the home.

The Framework really supported us to drill down to the main areas we wanted to focus on, rather than trying to do too much too soon. This has then fed directly into our school improvement plan and Governor meetings so that we can measure the impact of the Framework and ensure that we tailor the work to meet the needs of our community. The partnership with parents is key in ensuring that our children get the very best from all of us and the Framework has further developed our thoughts and ideas to continue striving for the best for our parents and children.

Since 2022, we have focused on the following three Principles:

Principle 3 – Communication attitudes and approach

Principle 4 – Support for Learning and

Principle 6 – Supporting Aspiration.

Our key actions have included:

- developed our use of parental surveys to support us with wraparound provision, views on homework amongst other areas to ensure parent voice is heard.
- invited families into reading cafes in school to celebrate our love of reading.
- taking part in the Start Small, Dream Big project which focuses on careers linked to our learning in school.
- from September 24, taking part in the family learning pilot to engage more parents in adult education / learning alongside their child.

...to name a few!

In September 2023, we were delighted to receive an overall 'Good' Ofsted grading, with our Personal Development being recognised as 'Outstanding'.

Doubletrees School

Where families and staff “Achieve, Belong, Communicate, Develop and Enjoy!” together.

Context

We are a special school that caters for pupils from across mid and east Cornwall. Our pupils are aged from 2 to 19 and have a wide range of multiple and complex needs including, PMLD, moderate to severe learning needs, communication needs, including ASD. 100% of our children have EHCP's in place. We have over 43% pupil premium. We have an increasing roll and are currently over PAN (96) with 98 pupils on roll. Many of our pupils are transported to school by taxi and buses so we do not see many of our families on a day-to-day basis.

We are a school with high expectations and a drive to reflect and continuously improve.

Focus

Our ABC's are the core vision which underpin everything we do at Doubletrees School. “Achieve, Belong, Communicate, Develop and Enjoy!” Integral to this is our whole school approach to ensure effective parental engagement which has been a strategic focus for us this year. This is because we have reflected on what has worked well for us during the Covid 19 pandemic and how we can build on this. During the pandemic we noticed some parents were under confident to know how to support their young person with remote learning. There was a real ‘fear’ of how to support with learning, contrasting their ease and confidence with the complex ‘care’ aspect. We also wanted to act on the feedback parent carers have provided us as part of our EHCP review surveys.

We wanted our families to feel better informed in what and how their young people were learning and how we work in partnership to achieve their targets. We also wanted to increase the activities and range of events we offer; because of the Covid Pandemic, some of these have slipped over the past couple of years and we wanted to re-establish and improve what we do in this area.

Approach

We started out by using the parental engagement audit tool to review our existing practice. Prior to this, we had put actions in place to build parent and community relationships, but these were limited to more informal and ‘ad hoc’ strategies. The audit allowed us to focus on and target key areas.

We reflected on the feedback parent carers have given us throughout the year. We then collated further information from staff to gain wider views, opinions, and ideas. The main areas in the Parental Engagement Framework we focussed on for ideas and support were:

Quality of education

- **Principle 4:** Support for learning.
- **Principle 3:** Communications.

Once we had identified the key areas, we explored Cornwall LA's Parental Engagement Framework for evidence-based resources that could support parent carers with their children's learning. Our key actions included:

- Reviewing how effective our parent partnerships meetings and our EHCP review meeting were, and to ensure they were well attended; consistently delivered and focused on how we work together to support their children's learning.
- Reviewing the quality of our home school letters and communications (including home school diaries) and again, ensuring they have clear content and support learning.
- Explore how the family app for Evidence for learning (Assessment tool) can be used to support remote learning and engagement with parents/carers across the school.

- Post Covid; we wanted to open our school back up again - look for more opportunities for feedback with the aim of increasing our engagement opportunities through parent information, sharing workshops, 2-way communication 'coffee shop' walk and talk meetings, website help guides, open day sessions and celebration events.
- Ensure parents know who to go if they have a concern and review with staff what worked well during Covid and to carry forward the best practise in the future. Ensuring clear protocols were in place for how and when we respond to parents.

Parental surveys showed parents wanted a variety of activities across the year. Not one approach particularly stuck out as preferred.

The project was led by the Headteacher, but all staff were involved. It was an agenda item during all senior leadership team (SLT) meetings and staff meetings. The Headteacher, family liaison officer and the school pastoral and behaviour lead met monthly to monitor progress against the intended outcomes.

Impact

We have seen a positive impact in many areas:

- Parent carers report they now understand the progress their child is making, and how this is assessed. There are regular opportunities to discuss the actions that the school and parent carers will take together to support progress. **This year we went from 85% to 96% attendance at parent partnership meetings.**

- In the Autumn term only 81% of parents felt they knew how to support their child with their learning - this has increased in our most recent survey and **100%** reported that **'the school gives me and my child the support they need to succeed, and the school lets me know what my child is learning.'** We also standardised the approach and information that must be shared at our parental consultation meetings to ensure **'standardised experiences'** across the school. **100%** of parents said they had the opportunity to **review their child's work.** Newsletter communications from class teams has increased 'learning' content.
- Recent surveys showed that **81%** of parents now understood how we **assess our children** compared to 72% in the Autumn term 2021. **Evidence for learning** has started to be used by learners' families; this has been successful in recording and maintaining the remote learning 'two-way conversations' and as a result we have **improved links between home and school for shielding learners during the Covid 19 pandemic.** We have **quality assured remote learning virtual/live opportunities through parent and learner comments and engagement in activities** being logged. Parents and learners were able to upload photos and videos of them engaging in class based virtual/ live remote learning opportunities, thus sharing what was effective and what needs further development to increase engagement.
- We have **increased the opportunities for parent carers to join in the celebration of success** in learning, for example through open sessions and sharing assemblies. Onsite and

remote open/ sharing learning days have also been introduced. Every class has held one each term this year. **Attendance at these events has increased term on term.**

- "Toolkits" and a detailed programme of workshops events have been implemented to guide parents and to provide resources around the most effective ways to support children were well received. Uptake total numbers were quite low, but they did gradually increase.
- The programme on offer was extensive and varied and it included support from Parent Carer Cornwall. Subject leads were keen to offer sessions too! Feedback of those who attended was very positive.

'Thank you, Doubletrees School, for a brilliant, well planned, informative event today. I came away with lots of information that will help me to plan xx's transition into adult life and what comes

'Just excellent-thanks'

Finally, 95% (up from 85%) of parents know they can approach us when they have a concern or need someone to talk to, and when they have raised concerns with the school they have been dealt with properly.

Key learning

It is important that you ask for feedback and create opportunities for engagement that are genuine otherwise you can miss out on key learning opportunities. The initial day we had together at the beginning of the pilot project when we explored the toolkit really supported us to narrow down our focus on what mattered. **This project has really supported us to create a shift in emphasis, away from the relationship between parents and our schools, to a focus on the relationship between parents and their children's learning.** Parent carer engagement has become more embedded in the school ethos and families are increasingly seen as partners in their child's education. As a school we believe strongly that efforts put into working with families and forging community partnerships can pay dividends to the school.

What happened next

Since the completion of this case study in 2022 we have used the Parental Engagement Framework to:

- Continue to evaluate our provision and then plan our next steps, integrated, within our whole school improvement plan.
- Reviewed our family support worker role. We now have a specific role in school for parental engagement.

Parental surveys were telling us they would like us to focus on creating more clubs and activities at school. This area can be limiting to young people with disabilities, so we needed to link up with our wider community to develop and improve our offer. We also wanted to review how we could further address the barriers to parent carer engagement. Since the case study we have used the toolkit to address:

Principle 5: Community matters

Principle 7: Addressing the barriers to parental engagement.

Actions have included:

- The Family Engagement Lead implemented a parental engagement action plan. (Using the parent carer toolkit and audit) Parents were given a clear and supportive menu of activities to get involved with. The parental engagement action plan is evaluated for impact termly. The audit is updated and shared with stakeholders.
- Reviewed the quality of the relationships we have with parents. This included a wider offer of external agencies and school staff offering support groups for parents.
- We reviewed our use of social media to ensure it was effectively used a tool to raise information sharing with parents. We have encouraged parent carers to attend events run by staff in school and by other organisations by promoting their events and sharing information in newsletters and through social media. We held specific events in school where possible and offered for parent carers to attend online.
- Created a 'family connection' leaflet, providing support, information, and advice for parent carers once a month – specifically in relation to education and learning support at home, activities to do at home and to take part in through other services, inspiring stories and support, workshops, and mental health support for parent carers.
- Utilised feedback to support to broaden our extra-curricular offer in school.

Impact

As a result of the steps we took, our latest parental survey reported that:

- 93% of parents felt the school supported their child's wider development.
- 93% felt that their child could take part in clubs and activities in school.
- 100% of parents felt we keep them well updated on what and how their child learns.

Parental comments included:

“All the staff involved are amazing, thank you for all your support with everything.”

“Thank you to all the class team for the help and support you have given to my child; it is very much appreciated.”

“My child is always happy to come to school and always happy when he returns home. He certainly makes the most of all his experiences.”

“I am so pleased that my child continues to be happy and engaged at school. Thank you to the whole team for your ongoing support.”

This also supported us to secure our OFSTED outcome last year where we achieved good overall with outstanding for behaviour and attitudes. The report included that, ‘Pupils experience a wide range of opportunities to enrich their learning. There is a clear focus on ensuring pupils are fully involved in the community. Pupils participate in local community events and beyond. It helps them to develop their awareness of the world around them.’

Going forward we will continue to use this framework, which is an embedded tool in our school evaluation process. We have signed up for our next project... we have been accepted to be a part of the family learning pilot, an exciting next step on our journey.

Penpol School

“Penpol pupils are curious, creative, and courageous learners. Our school community believes in authenticity as the foundations of deep-rooted learning. Through our rich and relevant curriculum, we nurture community-minded, forward-facing international citizens of the future.”

Context

Penpol is a 2-form entry community primary school in the coastal town of Hayle. A broadly average proportion of our pupils have special educational needs and 42% of pupils live in the most deprived 20% of areas of England.

We are a proudly inclusive school, committed to working closely with our families in order to support every child. We recognise that those who are at risk of marginalisation in the broader community face similar challenges when working with schools and other public bodies and that it is our duty diversify our provision so that it best meets the needs of all.

Focus

Parental engagement at Penpol is something we have long been proud of and seemed strong overall. At the outset of this project, we identified that there were a smaller number of less-vocal parents whose needs were at risk of marginalisation and with whom we hoped to build far better engagement.

We took part in the pilot project in order to build our evidence-based solutions to enhancing meaningful engagement with families. We focused on Principle 7 from the Parental Engagement Framework – Addressing Barriers to parental engagement.

Approach

We planned a number of initiatives each designed to reach out to members of our community most at risk of marginalisation, in particular:

- Parents and guardians experiencing challenges with their mental health.
- People of colour and families who have experienced racially discriminatory behaviour.
- Parents and guardians whose own experiences of learning and employment are less positive.
- Parents and guardians of pupils with additional learning needs

Our initiatives are set out below:

Space Programme

Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally – a five-week course, led by trained members of our team, for twelve parents and guardians. In focusing upon mental health and wellbeing strategies, parents are supported to be more present and impactful in their children’s social and emotional development.

Careers Fair

Recognising that careers education can be hugely impactful for primary-aged children, whilst their aspirations are being formed, parents and guardians are engaged as both exhibitors and accompanying visitors in our careers fair.

Walk and Talk

Led by members of our wellbeing team, these regular opportunities for parents and guardians to walk and talk together, during the school day, are designed to reach those families who may feel less comfortable sitting down in the school for meetings.

Forest School Stay and Play

Building upon past successes of running an in-school Stay and Play session, we have introduced a weekly forest school session for our new intake pupils throughout the summer term.

Race Equality Taskforce

A working party formed to steer our anti-racist strategy and to ensure that every aspect of our parent and guardian engagement is proactively welcoming and inclusive. More about this work can be found here: <https://www.penpolschool.co.uk/diversity-and-inclusion/>

Reading Army

All parents are invited to volunteer as members of our reading army. Those doing so are provided with an in-house induction and access to full Read Write Inc Training.

Online Platforms

We have made greater use than ever before of our website and online platforms in providing support, guidance and resources to parents and guardians. This includes linking videos to our teaching of phonics, an online equality and diversity glossary and more in-depth sharing of our curriculum design and delivery.

Tea and Talk

Led by our SENDCo and open to all, this is a regular forum for parents and guardians to get together to talk about challenges they face and support each other to find solutions. Visitors such as health visitors, mental health professionals and colleagues from the Early Help Hub attend to provide additional support and guidance.

Workshops and Open Classrooms

Following COVID restrictions, we welcomed parents back into school with open arms, leading workshops and sharing in learning celebrations.

Impact

- As a result of this concerted effort to reach out to our parents and guardians more creatively and more broadly, we have seen a number of tangible gains:
- More regular involvement from key vulnerable families has allowed us to better support pupils through challenging experiences outside of school.
- Parents and guardians at risk of marginalisation work with school staff with increased confidence, also modelling these relationships to their pupils.
- Stakeholders at all levels are given greater agency in how the school meets their needs and, in the context of race and equality, how we can affect change in the broader community.
- Our new Reception intake families are increasingly confident in and proud of their school community, with pupils, parents and guardians forging friendships ahead of beginning their school journey.
- SPACE attendees felt more grounded themselves and better placed to respond to children's emotional needs.
- Conversations around careers have been reinvigorated at home. Most significantly, mental health and wellbeing has been a common topic of conversation amongst all stakeholders.

“It was great to meet other parents who were dealing with the same issues as me. The staff running the training created a safe space where I felt comfortable to share things. I’m looking forward to meeting up at other events in school and to continue learning.”

“Working together, we can really make a difference.”

Key learning

- Mental health and wellbeing support benefits everyone. There is a real and ready appetite for increased support to families with regards to mental health and wellbeing.
- Taboos can hugely damage in presenting barriers. However, as key component of community, schools can make significant strides in bringing important topics to the table, thus breaking taboos.
- Bringing the ‘be comfortable being uncomfortable’ approach to communications with parents and guardians has been unanimously well-received.
- Listening to all actively and patiently is a worthy investment.

- The Framework is an invaluable resource moving forward, in helping to guide our engagement work school- wide. In addition to its wealth of evidence and guidance, it presents a range of fantastic ‘off the hook’ resources to use with staff, parents, and pupils. We found several toolkit resources to be a perfect starting point for opening up the conversation with our broader staff team.

What Happened Next

Following this work, we have continued to broaden the ways in which we bring parents and guardians into life at school. New initiatives include regular parent/child reading sessions, increased opportunities for children to share and perform with their families and regular activity evenings for children and family members in our new nursery.

We are working carefully to broaden our offer of workshops and adult learning sessions. As well as leading many of these ourselves, we are drawing upon external expertise also, such as a ‘Celebrating Neurodivergence’ morning, open to all parent carers our surrounding area. We are currently working with the Local Authority’s Adult Education team to plan a series of programmes for Penpol parent carers for the next academic year.

Our careers fair has gone from strength to strength and, this year, we collaborated with colleagues in neighbouring Hayle and Bodriggy Academies to take collective responsibility for inspiring career pathways for all in Hayle.

The important work begun by our Race and Identity Taskforce continues, now with a broader remit as our ‘Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce.’ Working together with children, parents, staff, and broader agencies, we continue to champion under-represented members of our community and hold ourselves for the delivery of a diverse and representative curriculum.

Most importantly, as a result of our work with the framework, we remain readier than ever to welcome all new members of the broader community as active participants in our school’s onward journey.



Trewergie Infants' and Nursery School

 Working together with parents to care, help and succeed in embedding children's love of learning.

Context

Trewergie Infants' school and nursery is situated in Redruth, a former industrial area with high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Mental health, poor communication skills along with high numbers of separated families are all factors in our school. We are a large, three form entry, Infants' school with a capacity of 270 nursery pupils on role. We are part of the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust (TPAT).

Our local area is an area of high deprivation in respect of income, employment, education, skills and training, health deprivation and disability. 10% of our pupils are identified as being in the 0-10% of most deprived and 26% of pupils are within the top 30% of most deprived. This level of deprivation has an impact on children's education. Parental engagement has always been a problem for our school, with issues including lack of confidence, childhood issues in education themselves, ability, or willingness to support and engage with school to support their children.

Focus

We have worked to build trusting and supportive relationships with our parents. In 2015, we became the first school in Cornwall to achieve 'The Leading Parent Partnership Award' which demonstrates our commitment to working with and alongside parents. We recognised the importance of parental involvement in school life and are committed to maintaining an effective and purposeful working relationship between home and school to achieve optimal results in children's learning. Taking part in Cornwall Local Authority's parental engagement pilot

has enabled us to move to our next stage in development. **We used the Framework for Parental Engagement and focussed in on principle 3 communication and on principle 4 support for learning.** Throughout the pandemic, we developed improved communication and relationships with our parents. However, they needed huge support to deliver home learning as many lacked the knowledge and skills to help their children. Previously, parents were reluctant to attend meetings, trips, workshops or even support reading and spelling at home.

Approach

The following is a summary of the key actions that we took using the Parental Engagement Framework and Toolkit which included: -

- Developed a parental engagement audit to give the 'parents a voice' and to inform our next steps.
- Ensured that the vision and values of the school are shared with parents, via the website and in new welcome packs.
- Staff offered a range of communication strategies to meet the needs of individual parents and provided information through a variety of platforms to suit them. These included the school's website, Facebook, Google Classroom, Class Dojo, Tapestry, newsletters, weekly emails, phone, face to face and video calls.
- Parents are sent termly topic maps to outline all subjects taught with objectives so they can see and discuss their child's learning at home and with the class teachers.
- Involved parents in assemblies, curriculum fayres, reading books, information sessions and trips so they are part of the life of the school.
- Provided staff with professional development on effective communication strategies with parent carers so that difficult conversations could be held confidently.
- Parents have open door opportunities to speak with staff.
- Teachers timetabled open afternoons and year group learning presentations opportunities for parents to engage with their child's learning.

- Non-judgmental, confidential advice/training offered to parents for Reading, Phonics, Writing, Maths, Phonic Screening and SATS.
- Parents are invited in to be guest speakers for topics being learnt in school, so they are instigating the learning and being seen as joint educators.

Impact

We have seen a significant impact in our parental engagement since last year (2021-2022) which is reflected in the following information:

- Engagement at parents' consultations improved. Autumn 2021- 62% Spring 2022- 84% Summer 2022 -90%
- Parents have enjoyed coming into school, seeing their children's classrooms, and talking face to face. Those parents who struggle with childcare and work commitments have appreciated the choice of flexible phone calls or zoom meetings at times that suit them. Teachers going the extra mile, has meant that parents are willing to be more supportive and involved.
- 98% of parents who completed the June 2022 parental engagement questionnaire, reported they are informed and supported to engage with their child's learning.
- Parents attending learning workshops increased from 5% to 30% over the year, with positive feedback.
- Parents helping and supporting trips has been successful. Every parent has felt invited and included by teachers. In key stage 1, parents have been fundamental to our successful trips and every trip has had surplus parent helpers wanting to be involved.

- Key stage 1 expected level of attainment has improved with interventions and parent support in place from September 2021 to June 2022. Parents have worked with the school to complete additional work at home to compliment, reinforce and revisit learning from school. This has embedding knowledge more long term and retrieval has been more successful.
- Results are shown in the table below:

	Reading	Writing	Maths	Phonics screening
2021	51%	46%	64%	85%
2022	70%	61%	71%	91%

Key learning

The impact of our actions, using the Parental Engagement Framework has been significant in terms of effective communication and support for learning. Enabling parents to help reflect, shape, and support their child's learning has created a strong and effective partnership where parents understand and support the education delivered by school.

Parents are impressed by our bespoke curriculum designed to meet the needs of our community and celebrating its history and heritage. We have seen an improvement of parents reading and spelling with their children at home as well as creating projects inspired by learning done in school.

Next steps

Continue with the positive and successful actions in place this year and support new staff with our parent engagement vision.

Target nursery and reception parents to create a 'Parents of Trewirgie Action Team'. This team

will work with senior leaders to drive the school forward involving parents, community figures and raise funds to enhance the curriculum and cultural experiences that our children need.

What happened next

Since the completion of the case study in 2022, we have used the success of the Parental Engagement Framework to further support and strengthen our links with the community and our engagement with parents and families.

As a part of our school development plan and in discussion with the Local Management Committee, we decided to stay focussed in on principle 3 communication and on principle 4 support for learning because these are still the priorities for our families. Our school sends out frequent parent voice questionnaires to listen to the changing views and needs of our families, especially considering the cost of living. Feedback highlighted that our families felt supported by the school and their children were happy and well educated but they needed support with clothing, cost of trips, school uniforms and food banks. So, we put into place the following.

- We employed an experienced social worker to become our Pastoral Lead to work in school to support our children and families using the THRIVE approach.
- Created a community larder on the school grounds that is stocked with food donations, second hand clothes and school uniform, including shoes and books.
- Our PTA have organised community events like Xmas fairs, discos and other fundraisers which have paid for lots of school trips and reduced the costs of many others.

As a result, our families are more engaged and responsive to the school and staff. They feel genuinely supported and want to work us to help their children to succeed. In 2024, pupil consultations were 100% attended either by face to face or phone. The majority of these took place in school because parents wanted to see their children's learning and be more engaged. This year, we also saw an increase of 60% of parents wanting to help out on school trips and those who came gave positive feedback on the school's social platforms such as Class Dojo.

Our schools current priority has been focussing on engaging parents early on in their child's education and learning. Our early years lead looked at 'school readiness' and working alongside the National Literacy Trust, sent out a survey to highlight what does that look like for our parents and do their children have those skills and are ready to learn.

Since the summer term, we have offered a series of workshops that focus on those school readiness skills and how parents and families can help children to develop these at home, in preparation for starting school. It has been about informing parents about what is important at an age-appropriate stage such as toilet training, developing independence in dressing and encouraging curiosity but also resilience in problem solving to support their physical and social emotional growth.

Our hope is to engage our parents before their children's school journey starts so that relationship and engagement only strengthens over time.



Carbeile Junior School

 **Be empowered, Be courageous, Be your best, Belong!**

Context

Carbeile Junior School is a three-form Local Authority primary school in Torpoint with approximately 340 pupils from years 3 - 6. Our attendance is currently 94.38% which is in line with the national average of 94.9%. 26% of our pupils are identified as having special educational needs (SEN) which is slightly higher in comparison to the national average of 17.3%.

Focus

At Carbeile Junior School, we understand the importance of parental engagement and are committed to maintaining an effective and impactful relationship to support children's achievements and wellbeing. As a school, we feel proud of our parental engagement but wanted to identify, support and bridge barriers with specific families. Therefore, we used the **Parental Engagement Framework to support our work with a particular focus upon Principle 7, 'Addressing Barriers to Parental Engagement' as we wanted to further strengthen these relationships between our school setting and our 'yet to reach' parents.**

Approach

We followed a planned approach throughout this project. Our first step was to complete the parental engagement audit tool with our senior leadership team to review our existing practice. This then branched out to all teaching staff in the form of a training session, where a diamond activity stimulated discussions on parental engagement as colleagues ranked our school's specific barriers in order of importance. We then reached out to all families in the form of a questionnaire.

Initiative 1: Attendance and lateness

- Our aim was to closely monitor and identify specific families who have persistent low attendance or lateness.
- Letters of support were delivered to these identified and targeted families.
- Reminders about the importance of attendance and punctuality were highlighted in newsletters.
- Positive letters were sent out the following term to families whose attendance/lateness had improved.
- Free breakfast club invites were given to families who were identified as 'yet to reach' with low attendance, lateness or if there were low-level concerns over a child's wellbeing.

Initiative 2: Online tracking system for parents' evenings

- Our aim was to provide a user-friendly, online system that was convenient for all families to book a parents' evening slot with their class teacher.
- We also wanted to closely monitor which families did not sign up to identify our 'yet to reach' families.

Initiative 3: Pupils' transition when starting Carbeile Junior School

- Previous questionnaires and feedback from families identified the transition from our main feeder infant school to our junior school as being difficult for some pupils.
- Subsequently, we increased our transition activities: the year 3 teachers firstly met all children and their families in their infant school setting; there were various occasions where children in year 2 visited our school and took part in social activities such as a picnic afternoon, and each year 2 pupil was paired with a year 6 buddy. These transition activities were in addition to our whole school transition day, giving children and their families a range of opportunities to meet their new teacher and find out about our school.
- These additional transition activities also supported us in explaining to our new families our main forms of communication: text messaging service direct to mobile phones, newsletters emailed to families, Class Dojo with private messaging/whole class story messages and face-to-face meetings via our welcoming and positive school office.

Initiative 4: Supporting parents with children's home learning opportunities.

- 'How to' information sheets were sent to all parents with clear guidance and support for home learning.
- Year 3 information packs were made for the new cohort.
- 'How to' videos were created as an additional media platform and direct links were sent via text message, newsletter and via our school website.
- Various workshops were led by teaching staff with the aim to equip and empower families to support their child with home learning opportunities. These workshops included: supporting reading at home, supporting maths learning, online safety, and extra-curricular opportunities. We also held termly SEN cafes in collaboration with our local infant school and secondary school to develop the relationships with families who have children with SEN s and identify further ways to support them.
- All workshops were advertised through our school newsletter and Facebook page with reminders being sent via our text messaging service.

Impact

- From the identified families who were sent letters of support to encourage higher attendance or reduce lateness in the first term, 62% were sent a letter of positivity the following term as their percentage had significantly increased.
- It was identified that the 'yet to reach' parents who showed little improvement across these two terms was a result of specific, personal reasons that we continue to work alongside.

- With the greater emphasis on attendance and punctuality, more parents are discussing its importance and sharing any concerns with staff. This has helped our school to identify the barriers to attendance and support wherever possible.
- 79% of all parents at Carbeile signed up to our new online parents evening system using the quick link that was sent via a text messaging service. The remaining 21% of parents were closely monitored: it was identified that all these families had regularly engaged with our school through different meetings or school events and so did not feel they required a specific parents' evening session.
- Using the new transition activities, our team 3 teachers met with 100% of the new families.
- 72% of new year 3 families completed our school survey: of these families, 100% strongly agreed that all the transition activities were good, and they felt their child was happy and well prepared to start our school in September. Families also felt they knew what their child would be learning about and how to discuss any issues with the relevant members of staff.
- Various families attended our workshops throughout the year to support with home learning opportunities. This ranged from around 20 parents who attended our SEND cafes up to 100 families who attended our session to support reading at home.
- Please see below a small selection of parental comments following our initiatives.

"Excellent transition process, brilliant and timely communication. I find the text message reminders really helpful."

"The workshops were so helpful! I've learnt many ways to support at home."

"Excellent communication between the schools. Really easy transition. It already feels like we have been at Carbeile for ages."

"The new parent's booking service is very easy and clear to understand."

"The videos make it really clear how to access and support with home learning."

"A very nervous child can take longer to settle however all help/support was given to support her with the changes."

Key learning

- Although attendance and lateness can prove a challenging area to discuss with families, our focus was on maintaining a positive relationship and offering support wherever possible. This really helped to maintain our strong relationships with all families.
- Using an online parents evening system enabled us to easily analyse and track families while also providing parents with an easy, user-friendly system.
- Having strong transition activities supported both children and their families with starting our school and helped to reduce the number of families who may become 'yet to reach.'
- Having a wide range of communication styles, including texts, emails, Facebook, Class Dojo, and printed letters, worked extremely well to deliver key messages to all families.
- During our workshops and online 'how to' videos, incorporating children from our 'yet to reach' families proved highly effective to encourage these families to attend/watch our resources which subsequently supported in their engagement with our school.

Next steps

- Attendance and lateness will continue to be a high priority for the future, and we would like to work more closely with our attendance officer to further develop the support we can provide to all families.
- We would like to explore principle 4 with a focus on the effectiveness of our current approaches to home learning to further support parental engagement and pupil achievement.
- During a staff meeting, all teachers completed a diamond activity to identify the main barriers for families at our school. One main challenge that arose from this task was parents/carers who may lack their own essential skills to support their child. Subsequently, we will consider ways to support parents and signpost them to specific workshops and courses to better develop their skills.
- An additional topic that was discussed throughout the project was children's own anxieties and mental health around school. Next, we would like to further support these children and 'yet to reach' parents who have experienced previous family challenges, trauma, or a breakdown in relationships through our school pastoral team, our mental health practitioners, and the trauma-informed, educational programme, 'Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally.'



Grampound Road Village C.E School

Together with love we can inspire, discover and thrive.

Context

Grampound Road C of E Primary is a small village school, with mixed age classes, the number on roll is 109, which includes pre-school provision. The school has been through a period of change and instability with three different headteachers in a 6-year period and three academy trusts. The school is now part of The Rainbow MAT. Parental engagement has been inconsistent during this period, however, there has been an improving picture over the last two years. In June 2023 the school was graded as GOOD in the Ofsted inspection. One of our actions from the inspection was with regard to parental engagement.

Focus

Following on from the recent Ofsted inspection we decided to prioritise building our relationships with parents and to rekindle their involvement in the life of the school after the pandemic. Cornwall Local Authorities' Parental Engagement Framework has supported us in moving on in our next stage in development. We used the framework to focus on two principles.

- **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.

- **Principle 7: Addressing the barriers to parental engagement.** Working in partnership with parents and carers to address any barriers that exist between home and school. To be able to identify and implement strategies to support diverse and inclusive ways to bridge complex barriers.

Approach

We developed an action plan to support our planned approach to parental engagement. A summary of our approaches and activities includes: -

- Surveyed parents to ascertain their personal experiences of school and to use this to build on the positive and address any negative experiences. This included questions to ascertain how welcoming, safe and appropriate the school environment is for learning and engagement.
- Requested home visits for nursery and reception children to gather information that will enable the children to settle into nursery and reception classes and to establish positive links with families, especially those of vulnerable pupils.
- Information leaflet explaining staff roles within school, (at enrolment) which was added to the website.
- Parent carers workshops which included SPACE training which supported parents and children emotionally.
- Families and learners were asked for their ideas on family involvement. Building on this, we would like to develop a parent group from the local community who are keen to support those who are less confident in coming into school.
- Built trusting relationships by having the Headteacher, staff members and the school secretary at the gate each morning to welcome and to speak with parents.
- Class forums on the curriculum half termly.
- Whole school forum to share the content of the curriculum, including ideas for supporting children at home.

- Parents invited into collective worship to share the vision, values and linked bible story.
- Tea and talk sessions with parents and staff which focused on general feedback, SEND, safeguarding.
- Curriculum information available on the website for parents.
- Parents involved in school trips, collective worship, reading book fayres, and open afternoons in class.
- Encouraged more staff involvement with families through phone calls, to make themselves more available for appointments.
- Reworded our Pupil Premium statement in a non-judgemental and supportive way for all parent carers.
- Offered free breakfast club/afterschool club and afterschool activities to Pupil Premium children.
- More positive communications with parents in the form of for example, a text to share a child's success.
- The website has been updated to make it easier for parents to navigate.
- Using various platforms such as DOJO, texts, emails to make contact with hard-to-reach parents.
- A back-to-school guide for pupils at the end of the summer holidays in preparation for the new term.
- Established an open-door policy for parents to speak with staff.
- Parents/grandparents have been guest speakers in school during lessons for, example, a grandparent who took the first photo of DNA talked to the children about this in a science lesson.

- The parent support advisor is working with the parent engagement officer to offer joint support for some children.
- Free dance classes have been offered to some of our disadvantaged pupils.
- Organised a car share for a family with poor attendance.

Impact

We have seen a significant impact in our parental engagement since last year. We have invited parents in regularly and asked them how we can continue to improve. They have given us some great ideas and we have implemented them. Here are some of our successes:

- We have undertaken two surveys with parents, and the results clearly show that parents are happier with the service that the school provides. Survey results- 'I would recommend this school to another parent'- 73% (June 2023) said they would recommend the school compared to 91% (November 2023).
- Due to improved lines of communication the survey results showed- 'The school let me know how well my child is doing'- 62% (June 2023) compared to 93% (November 2023).
- Increased class forum attendance from parent carers in every class since the tea and talk session. The parents now participate with some learning, then they have the forum which is a curriculum information sharing session.
- Uptake by three families for free breakfast club, which was to support children in the successful transition from home to school.

- Good uptake of parents joining collective worship, this was to share our vision, values, linked bible story and definition of spirituality.
- More parents volunteering to help with school trips and enjoying the experience.
- Parents reported that they liked the back-to-school guide, which was sent out at the end of the summer holidays.
- We have some positive feedback from parents who wish to sign up to our SPACE training workshops commence in the summer term.

Key learning

The impact of using the Parental Engagement Framework has been significant. We feel that relationships between parents and school have been strengthened and that we are working together to improve our school and the experience for the children. Parents feel listened to, for example a parent asked us to consider having a year 6 buddy for pre-school children (typically we only have them for reception children), we had not thought of doing this before. We implemented it that week and thanked the parent in our weekly newsletter. The teachers have reported that because they are communicating more with the parents, they feel more confident to discuss issues. Parents feel more valued than ever before.

Our recent SIAMS inspection February 2024 stated: **'Prompted by the Christian vision, leaders have taken bold financial decisions to invest in a nurture class and a parent engagement officer. Pupils give testimony to the fact that this personalised support in school equips them to live out the vision beyond the school. Examples**

include pupils demonstrating love at home and supporting their neighbours. Adults comment on pupils' positive behaviour within and beyond the school. Surveys indicate that pupils and adults feel safe and happy and enjoy coming to school. Some staff highlight the caring nature of relationships, referring to their colleagues as their 'work family'.

Next steps

Our next steps are to continue to develop all the actions that we have undertaken so far, in addition we would like to work towards Principle 4: Support for learning from the Parental Engagement Framework.

We would also like to continue to build on our approach to being a 'listening school' as part of a whole school approach to parental engagement which links to principle 1 in the Framework. We aim to set up a small group of parent carers and representatives of the community to help provide the school with their views and have these considered on policy matters affecting the education of their children.



St Breock School

 Learning, love and laughter

Context

St Breock School is a one form entry school in Wadebridge, Cornwall, and is part of ASPIRE multi academy trust. The school has approximately 230 pupils on roll which includes a nursery. The school has seen a significant rise in Pupil Premium (PP) numbers to 26% which is in line with the National Average. Attendance is 95% and inline with National, however attendance of PP children is 92% significantly below non-PP attendance.

Focus

St Breock School wanted to be part of the Parental Engagement programme to strengthen relationships between school and home. We very much felt that this was the final jigsaw piece post pandemic to enable parents to become more actively engaged with school. We had noticed post pandemic that parent engagement in events, activities and communication had dwindled and our annual parent questionnaire had highlighted some areas we wanted to improve on, particularly communication and parent's understanding of how to support their children's learning at home.

We established a working group which had representatives from all stakeholders, This included the senior leadership team (SLT), teachers, support staff, Governors and invited parents who had contributed recommendations to the questionnaire. Once the group was in place and terms of reference set, we used the Parental Engagement Framework audit tool to analyse the current position with staff, parents, and the working group's input. **Principle 3 – Communication and Principle 4 - Support for learning were identified as our focus.**

Approach

In a survey conducted in 2022 parents felt that their children's experience of school was positive with 95% of children happy in school, 98% taught well and 95% feeling safe and secure. In contrast, the questions which focussed on parent's experience were less positive with 78% feeling that the school was managed well in terms of communication and 73% saying they received valuable information about their child.

Initially we focussed on 'routines and practices' The working group wrote a Parent Engagement Policy which was prepared in a written and visual format and shared with parents electronically and through the school forum. This established not only the commitment the school had in engaging with parents but also the expectations the school has on parents engaging with them. This is shared with parents and staff as part of their induction to school.

We reviewed the current programme of events for parents and made enhancements to enable a broader range of opportunities for all parents across the year. We established dates early in the academic year for annual events and shared these with parents. Our programme of events included the additions of a SENDCo Coffee Morning and PP Parent Coffee Morning. These were informal drop in events held in school for targeted groups. Over the year the SLT established a good working relationship with our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and Link Family Worker, which enabled them to be involved in the informal coffee mornings.

This work naturally linked into our focus on Principle 4 'Support for learning. We added to our programme of events with two planned learning fairs to which we invited all families to support their understanding areas of learning. We surveyed parents to find out what they wanted the content of workshops to be and focussed them on their choices – Maths, ICT, and reading. Whilst these workshops were positively received attendance remained low, and we looked critically at the times of day we were offering these. On analysis of our parent body, we noted that the majority of our children were collected from school by a parent, rather than a grandparents, friend, or childcare, indicating that the majority of our parents were available at the end of the school day.

We held a reading event immediately before the end of the school day, which was well attended by parents from across the school. We are now able to schedule our parent learning events at a time suitable and convenient for them. Building on the success of this we have further enhanced our programme of events to include 'Fabulous, Fun, Family Fridays' or F4 for short! We have also reached out to our community for volunteers who have a skill to share and host monthly workshops for parents and children on a Friday after school for an hour. We have hosted an illustrator workshop, composer workshop, cooking workshop and yoga workshop so far and more are planned for the future. This has been positively received with a good cross section of parents attending each session.

We reviewed our 'two-way communication' approach to enable us to communicate more effectively with parents. Through parent feedback they told us that communication was too frequent and via too many channels. The quick shift from paper-based newsletters to a hybrid and then onto completely electronic during the pandemic had caused communications to become too immediate. We reviewed our approach and refined it to one weekly news where all information was framed. Social media was used for celebration only. We also established the role of class parent rep for each year group. These volunteers took responsibility for setting up parent based 'What's App' groups where reminders could be shared, and questions answered whilst signposting parents to school should the question require it.

Having previously tightened up our procedures around the monitoring of attendance, we established a robust system for communicating attendance and approached parents where improvements needed to be made. We wanted to work on the celebration of success with attendance, so established 'Thank you' postcards which we sent home to families where notable improvements had been made. SLT also sent text messages to parents who had made every effort to get their children in, even under difficult circumstances to recognise their efforts.

The final area we looked at was communicating children's progress. Parents told us they were often surprised at their child's academic attainment and progress at the end of the year and did not feel this had been communicated throughout. To address this, we introduced a simple communication slip at our mid-year parents evening. This outlined academic attainment, effort and personal development, alongside clear points on what could be worked on at home. This was used as a format for the meeting and the parent had something physical to take away with them which illustrated their child's attainment and progress.

Impact

The impact of our approach has been evidenced by the increased attendance from parents to school events and reciprocal relationships between parents and the school.

Our recent questionnaire revealed that 95% of parents feel that the school is led and managed well. 95% of parents feel they communication is effective.

The school has had almost 100% reduction in complaints and where parents do approach the school established relationships allow these to be dealt with quickly and positively.

All staff believe the project has had a positive impact on developing relationships with all families. They also say the project has tooled them with effective communication skills and they feel positive about parental engagement. Teachers have the confidence to regularly invite parents in to share success in learning. Teachers have facilitated termly sharing events and learning together events. We have also invited parents to attend our weekly Celebration Assembly.

We have established good relationships with harder to reach parents through our informal events and open conversations. One parent told us that the text message to thank her for getting the children into school despite some challenging personal circumstances 'absolutely made her day' and 'she knows the school just wants the best for her and her children.'

In addition to the improvements in relationships the project has also impacted on our strategic plans for the building moving forward. The plans we had in place to adapt some 'dead space' into small teaching areas has now been altered to include a meeting space for informal parent consultations. This will allow for drop ins by parents to talk with the SENDCo, Parent Support Advisor, Headteacher, EWO and Link Family Worker, whilst also providing a hub from which other professionals can meet with parents.

Key learning

- Staff understand the importance of regular two-way communication and the rewards from investing time in relationships with parents.
- Consideration of the timing of events is crucial in their success and not being afraid to move away from traditional approaches.

The dedicated time we have given to a focus on parental engagement as part of whole school development has been crucial in developing stronger relationships and a sense of belonging in our community. The framework has really supported us in reflection of our practice and developing next steps for working more effectively with parents.

Next steps

Continue to enhance our programme of events and share this with parents regularly. Continue to provide our F4 Events.

Plan for the implementation and development of our enhanced infrastructure which will allow a more regular relaxed opportunity for parent engagement.

Continue to provide parents with the opportunity to regularly feedback and communicate regularly how the school has addressed their responses.



St Day and Carharrck Community School

Enjoying, engaging, excelling

Context

St Day and Carharrack is a small Local Authority, one-form entry community school representing an increasingly diverse community. We have higher than national numbers of disadvantaged pupils claiming free school meals and we also have above average national numbers of pupils requiring Special Educational Need (SEN) support; in turn, we have above national numbers of pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). More recently, we have a growing number of children who have joined us from overseas and speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). A small proportion of our children belong to the Gypsy Roma Traveller community.

Our families are proud to live where they do. A sense of belonging to the long-established local community is important to many of them and we know it is our role to recognise and celebrate this. Given the unique profile of our school community, we recognise that the success of our children in meeting the school's values of, 'Enjoy, Engage and Excel' is dependent upon close working relationships with our families. We want these to be open, honest, and purposeful – with the child's best interests at the centre of each and every interaction.

Focus

During Covid, relationships between home and school were strengthened and valued as possibly, for the first time ever, regular, and consistent communication between school staff and families became imperative. As we 'returned to school' following lockdowns, these

relationships shifted, and we felt we lost some of those connections which had been built; we've needed to re-engage our families. It was recognised that face-to-face communication can be challenging for some of our parents and that they seemed to be relieved that school could assume the role of sole educators following Covid.

The focus for us, through the implementation of the Parent Carer Engagement Framework, was to re-establish relationships with families following this traumatic event. We needed to re-welcome families back into school, and for them to know that they are respected, listened to, and valued as key member of our community. As such we chose to focus our work on:

- **Principle 2 – A welcoming School: our culture, attitudes, and approach**
- **Principle 5 – Community Matters**

We know we can't assume what families want and need from us; we also know that parents are the experts of their children. The use of the Framework was to find out what was going to work and to move relationships forward once more.

Approach

It was important to us that engagement with families became an immediate priority. As such, we aligned the identified principles with current practices established within school, for example, our Rights Respecting Schools and Trauma Informed approaches. We didn't want another 'add on,' but something that supported us to shine a light on how we engage our families. Since 2022, parental engagement has been a driving factor within our school improvement plan to ensure that all staff and governors are on board as we move forward.

We knew we needed to keep our focus and desired outcome narrow to ensure success, using the framework to:

- Identify what our families feel is important when it comes to their relationship with school and establish the most effective methods of communication.
- Identify what helps to welcome families into school to enable them to feel comfortable and valued.

- Consider how we can best celebrate the local community to build mutual trust and respect knowing how important the locality of St Day and Carharrack is to our families.

We coordinated collating baseline data alongside our Education Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP) as part of a Mental Health audit. Parents completed a short survey which enabled us to elicit how they perceive their relationship with school. Finding out what is important to them enabled us to implement strategies based on this – using these to fill the ‘gaps. Our EMHP went on to create a parent focus group and a separate pupil focus group who met on a number of occasions to analyse the data from these surveys and consider what school could do in response – their suggestions informed the actions we decided to take.

Alongside this, we used a resource from the Framework, the ‘Welcoming and Including families gap analysis’ which was completed during a whole school staff training. We ensured this training included all school staff beyond teachers as a priority, raising its profile. The training session provided focused reflection time to identify our strengths and our gaps. We also asked our governing body to complete an audit also to ensure all stakeholders had involvement.

Pulling the data together, it became clear that re-establishing parent carer engagement would need to become rooted in parents feeling that both theirs and their child/ren’s voices are heard, valued, and celebrated and that we needed to refocus our communication efforts around this. Actions that followed included:

- Updating our ‘Nook’ to become parent friendly – we wanted it to become a warm and informative ‘adult’ space with information at hand to share with parents.

- Raising the profile of our Rights Respecting Schools steering group to ensure parents know that we listen to and value every child. This includes half termly focuses shares with parents, being explicit about all stakeholders’ responsibilities to engage with our children’s education.
- Covering the weekly newsletter and website with photos of all children celebrating their achievements.
- Introducing ‘3 phone call Friday’ – each class teacher calling 3 parents each week to simply celebrate what has gone well for their child this week.
- Weekly emails from class teachers to parents – this email explains the learning being covered in the week ahead along with any changes e.g., if children need P.E. kit on a different day.
- Identifying events which are best attended by families and scheduling these in as a rolling programme for each academic year. We also looked to use these events to promote key priorities at the same time e.g., a focus on school attendance. These included:
 - The Mini Marathon
 - A raffle
 - A cake sale
- Increased opportunities for parents of children with SEN to meet regularly, using our ‘Tea and Talk’ sessions to bring parents and external services together.
- Subject leaders implementing ‘parent friendly’ workshops to support with maths and phonics. We now hold an annual ‘phonics party’ for our Year 1 families to come and in learn about phonics alongside their child in an informal and fun manner.

Following on from the implementation of our key actions, we re-surveyed our parents to ascertain some exit data enabling us to evaluate the progress made towards achieving our outcomes.

Impact

Our parent carer entry and exit survey data evidence the impact of our approach and reflects positive change. The table below shows the average score parent carers gave against the statements. In particular we have been pleased with the increase in average scores for statements 2 and 3. We are now ensuring that we are a welcoming school and that the community know we value them.

Statement	Average Score – Oct 2022	Average Score – FEB 2024
Staff at school are happy	9.5	9.7
The school feels safe and welcoming	9.3	9.7
The voice of every learner is heard and valued	8.3	9.1
Our school recognises and supports all learners	8.7	9.4
I positively engage with school	9.0	9.4
I seek help from school when needed	9.4	9.6

Along with our quantitative data, the following parent carer feedback has been captured across a number of different events implemented to engage parents:

- ‘School is supportive. They give time to parents which encourages people to ask for help when needed.’
- ‘Staff are welcoming and friendly.’
- ‘School sends emails which are really helpful as an alternative means of communication.’
- ‘I was blown away by how Staff Member X has been so helpful and down to earth and her openness about her own experiences of being a parent have been priceless.’

The results of the surveys which we coincided with the on-going development of our mental health and wellbeing provision, have also helped ensure greater relevance of that provision – making it more bespoke to the needs of our community.

It is now felt by staff that school have positive and purposeful relationships in place. School has not received any formal complaints from parent carers over the last 2 years; staff are able to address concerns swiftly. It is now felt there is a collective shared desired outcome between home and school to ensure the best for the children in our community.

Parent carer engagement is now a thread that runs through all of our decision making when working at a strategic level. We continue to use our findings to help shape our provision and offer based on what we now know better about our families.

Key learning

- Effective and meaningful communication is only going to happen when respectful and trusting relationships are in place; communication and relationship are not mutually exclusive. It is important to show empathy and take the time to understand the position each other comes from.
- Don’t assume you know what is important to parent carers, it is absolutely worth investing the time to find out what is important to them, in order to specifically target actions to achieve outcomes. Listening to what our parent /carers tell us and then responding is key to families reporting feeling valued.
- Through the use of the Framework, we now know what the barriers to families engaging with school are. We are now empowered to take action to reduce these. As our school profile changes with cohorts leaving and joining, we now have the tools to find repeat processes when needed to ensure we’re meeting the needs of the community.
- As simple as it sounds, through celebrating our community’s children in as many ways as possible, parent carers have re-established their relationships with us. They can see we are invested in their children.

Next steps

- Continue embedding and building upon the mutually respectful and trusting relationships between home and school.
- Continue using professional development opportunities to upskill all staff to feel confident in communicating with parents when the circumstances become more complex or challenging.
- Formulate a formalised communication strategy with families and include this in key relevant policies.
- Begin to shift the focus of communication onto learning. Our families repeatedly communicate that they want their children to be happy; we want to extend beyond that and raise expectations to being happy and academically successful. We will use the principle 4 within the Framework to help us shape that work.



If you would like this information in another format or language please contact us:
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