

Report on the Pilot of a Toolkit for Parental Engagement



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

From Project to Process

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1. Executive summary

“This programme has helped us evaluate what we are doing for Parents to ensure their child’s learning environment is a two way process. We want our school to be welcoming to parents and to ensure all staff and parents are working to benefit the children”. (School 1)

This project involved 34 schools working with a toolkit to support parental engagement in children’s learning, under the auspices of a local authority and supported by the University of Bath. The project took place over one calendar year, from January 2016 to January 2017. Schools involved in the project worked through the toolkit; most schools attended at least one of the three away days which were also a part of the project.

Key findings from the project:

- At the start of the project, most of the schools involved showed that they understood parental engagement to be at the level of involvement with schooling: there was a concentration on getting parents into school, particularly for parents’ evenings, and on parents supporting schools with homework.
- Schools rated working with other schools as among the most useful elements of the toolkit process.
- Although one of the aims of the toolkit was to support schools to evaluate their work around parental engagement, most schools did not engage in this process as set out in the toolkit. Other means of evaluating this work should be found.
- Schools reported an increase in work around supporting parental engagement in the home, and around family learning, both shown to be effective in increasing attainment and narrowing achievement gaps.
- Schools showed a willingness to engage in the toolkit process, not only by devoting resources (mainly time) to the process but also in changes in behaviour and infrastructures in school.
- The project relied on the input of school staff, and short inputs from experts. There are indications that the greatest benefit from the project were derived from: the wish list, the barriers list, the incorporation of the action plan into school development/improvement plans and discussions between staff from different schools at the away days.
- Schools have reported various types of impact from the project. These include greater parental participation in school events, including parents’ evenings; improved relationships between families and school staff; increased confidence on the part of school staff in working with parents and on the part of parents coming forward to the school, and, importantly, increased conversations around learning in the home.
- By the end of the pilot, there are indications that some of the schools had significantly shifted their work around parental engagement through the continuum [1], so that they were concentrating on supporting parents’ engagement with children’s learning in the home learning environment.
- Some of the schools in the project have seen an important shift in emphasis, as they have taken work with parents “from project to process”. By this we mean that work around parental engagement with children’s learning is, for these schools, no longer something that

they do, as an unconnected series of events, but rather has become embedded within their working and infrastructure.

2. Context - Wiltshire Local Authority

This project took place working with 34 schools in Wiltshire Local Authority. Although for the most part Wiltshire residents enjoy a good standard of living, with a very low crime rate [2], beautiful countryside and many places of special scientific interest, there are still areas of deprivation spread throughout the authority; “significant areas of Wiltshire are in the 5% most deprived in the UK” [2, 5].

Overall, 7% of the children in Wiltshire Local Authority schools are classed as receiving Free School Meals (FSM), and 30% of these FSM pupils are identified as having Special Educational Needs.

Wiltshire schools are often rural, and some have a high percentage of military families; for one school in the pilot, this results in a 56% mobility rate of students over a year; another school is preparing to have their roll almost double next year when troops and families arrive home from deployment in Europe.

3. Literature review

3.1. Poverty and the achievement gap

The educational effects of economic disadvantage are well documented in the literature [3-5], 'family income causally impacts educational attainment' [6, 5]. Growing up in a situation of poverty can have far reaching effects on children's aspirations toward education, or at least have less ability to scaffold those aspirations into reality [7]. They are less likely than their more advantaged peers to attend pre-school (and thus, take advantage of the benefits this provides), and are much more likely to leave school early and with fewer qualifications than children from other backgrounds [8].

Moreover, child poverty and schooling underachievement tends to be cyclical in nature: children who do not do well in the current schooling system often become parents to children who also do not achieve high standards[3], and the link between poverty and underachievement seems to be becoming stronger, rather than weaker, as time goes on [9]. The link between poverty and educational achievement is particularly strong in the UK [9]. "In other words, in comparison to other OECD countries, children in the UK are more likely to achieve along socioeconomically predictable lines: well to do children will tend to achieve higher outcomes than children raised in poverty" [5] .

3.2. Parental engagement for improving outcomes

The value of parental engagement in children's learning is well known [10-16]. Parental engagement with young people's learning can have benefits for behaviour, homework and most importantly, for outcomes and achievement [14-16].

It is, however, important to understand precisely what is meant by the phrase, "parental engagement with children's learning". The term means much more than parental *involvement with schooling* which might be characterised as an interaction wherein schools give information to parents, and sometimes receive information in return [17]. Rather, what is of value is parents' engagement in learning, a much broader concept than schooling; what is of value to children's achievement is parents' engagement in what has been called the 'home learning environment' [18], meaning all the learning experiences available to a child or young person outside the school context [19-21].

It is important to shift the understanding of parental engagement with children's learning away from being based around the school (getting parents in for parents' evenings, for example) toward children's learning more broadly understood, to take in the home learning environment[1], as detailed below. It is this level of engagement which holds the most promise for narrowing the achievement gap between children of different backgrounds.

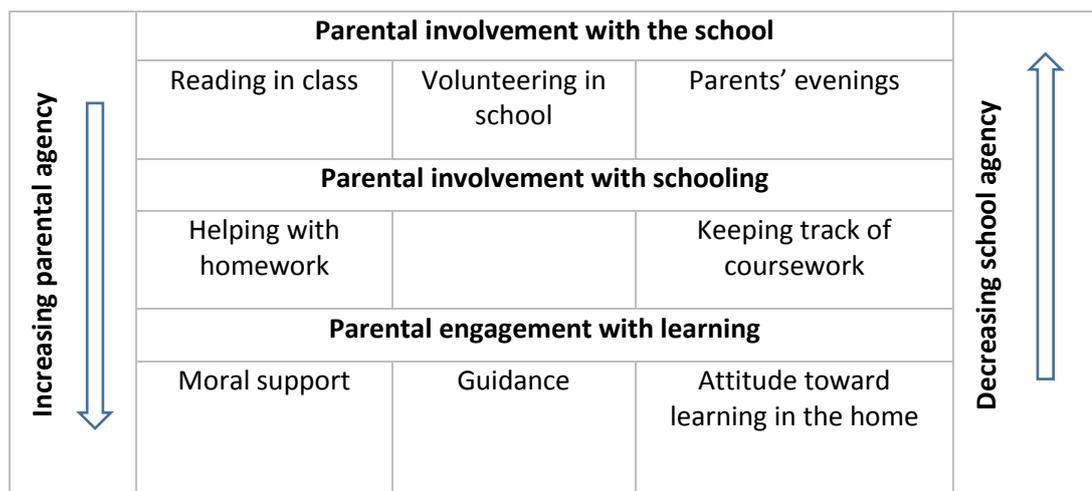


Figure 1. Parental Engagement Continuum (Based on [1])

However, research and experience have shown that school staff often equate “parental engagement” with the upper levels of this continuum, and focus on getting parents onto the school site [22]. There is, then, a need to shift understandings, beliefs and practices of school staff toward the lower levels of the continuum, particularly if we are to support the most vulnerable pupils.

3.3. Changing school culture and practice

The aim of this project was ultimately to increase outcomes for children and young people by supporting and enhancing the home learning environment. This was to be accomplished through work with schools, who would in turn support parents. This would in turn entail changes of practice on the part of the staff in the schools involved. Such changes in practice around engaging parents in the learning of their children are more likely to be successful if they come from the leadership of the school [14]

Although providing training for school staff is a multi-million pound industry, the research in this area indicates that the most useful and successful form of training for school staff comes from other staff, from professional discussions among teachers [23]. Research also appears to indicate that teachers are more likely to change their beliefs and practices when they have become convinced of the value of particular actions [24, 25].

4. Toolkit process

4.1. Development of the toolkit

The toolkit is based around the general principles of organisational change [26, 27] and professional development for teaching staff [24, 25, 28]. The first aim of the project was to examine the process involved in the toolkit, to understand if and how it helped schools move along the continuum of supporting parents to engage with the learning of their children. The second aim of the toolkit process was to support the home learning environment [12, 19] for pupils in the schools involved in the project, as a means of supporting achievement and narrowing the gaps in achievement between children from different backgrounds [5].

The toolkit was developed over some years, based primarily on the literature reviews for Best Practice in Parental Engagement [14], as well as other work in the field [22, 29-38], and work directly with schools and local authorities.

Wiltshire Local Authority became aware of the toolkit and dedicated time and resources to launching and supporting the process with schools within the authority.

Funding was sought to support the process and was granted by the Public Engagement Unit at the University of Bath (see Appendix One for the successful bid).

The toolkit pilot was announced to schools at the Wiltshire Boost Conference in 2015. At that time, 60 schools expressed an interest in being involved in the pilot. Communication with schools continued; in December of 2015, 34 schools committed to being part of the pilot.

The commitment from schools including signing a consent form to be a part of the pilot, participation in the away days for the project and completing evaluation forms on the toolkit process at the end of each term¹.

4.2. Content of the toolkit

The toolkit contains three main types of content.

- General information about parental engagement with children's learning. This section is based on the "Practitioner's Summary" from the earlier literature review [14] supplemented by links to other research.
- Tools for schools to use. These included a "Wish list", which schools were encouraged to use to say what they wanted to accomplish during the project with respect to parents' engagement with children's learning; a "Barriers" sheet noting what schools thought might impede progress toward these goals, and an Action Planning Sheet. This sheet was to be used by schools to plan specific actions (with beginning and end points, responsible named staff and evaluation measures).

¹ In the event, the majority of schools did not complete these forms and they do not, therefore, form part of the analysis of the toolkit pilot.

- Evaluation forms. These were detailed forms, based on Guskey's fivefold means of evaluation of teacher's professional development [25]. These sheets were to be returned to the project team, once a term.

4.3. Costings

The funding for this project came primarily from funds received as a result of a seed funding bid to the Public Engagement Unit at the University of Bath (£1,818), supplemented by other research funds from the University (£1008.99); the overall monetary cost was £2189.99. This was supplemented by contributions in kind from Wiltshire Local Authority, in the form of time from a School Effectiveness Lead Professional, as well as photocopying and provision of materials, such as projectors and lap tops for the away days.

4.4. Days – description, speakers, general feedback on days

There were two main elements to the toolkit project: the toolkit itself (delivered to schools electronically) and the days school staff came together to work with each other. These days were hosted by the University of Bath and Wiltshire Local Authority, and took place in January 2016, May 2016 and January 2017.

There were 34 schools who committed to the Toolkit Pilot, all from Wiltshire Local Authority². Among the students in these schools, there are at least 2,150 children classed as disadvantaged, at least 2,080 who qualify for free school meals and at least 1,670 pupils from service families³

January 18, 2016: Forty delegates from the schools worked through the wish list and barriers list from the toolkit. There were presentations by the project team, Dr Janet Goodall (U of Bath) and Dr Pam Carroll (Wiltshire Local Authority) as well as by Judy Vanderpump, (Organisational Development & Learning – Communities, Wiltshire Local Authority).

In between the first and second days, schools were expected to return at least one of the evaluation forms from the toolkit. Nine updates were received for the first term, and only two for each of the next two terms. The project team therefore created opportunities for feedback from schools at the away days, to collect thoughts on the toolkit as well as indications of impact.

May 17, 2016: 67 delegates from 29 schools attended the second away day for the project. There was a keynote presentation from Dr Rob Loe (The Relational Schools Project) on the value and importance of relationship in schools. There was a short update from the project team and three presentations from schools highlighting good practice. There was also a chance for all schools to meet briefly with each other and discuss their progress with the toolkit process.

January 16, 2017: There were 35 representatives of schools present for the final day of the project. A keynote paper was delivered by Dr Rita Chawla-Duggan (U of Bath) discussing her work on paternal/family engagement across a number of countries and her previous work with Father's Fridays. There was a presentation on parental engagement work in Scotland and Wales (Dr Janet Goodall) and an update from the Local Authority, and on work with phonics. There were also

² There are various schools in other locations, including Scotland, who have asked for copies of the toolkit. However, they were not involved in this pilot and their data are not recorded here.

³ These figures are given as "at least" because schools with fewer than 10 children in a category are given as a nil return; therefore the figures are likely to be at least slightly higher than the ones given here.

presentations from schools involved in the project. Schools also had a chance to share their “snapshots” with each other and discuss the project overall.

5. Findings/results

“The PE programme has given PP and PE a voice in school and it has raised the profile of PP children and the need for them to have support. They are now clearly identified on planning and we have appointed a PP TA”.

School 5

The toolkit project was long-listed for an award from the National Centre for Coordinating Public Engagement, in recognition of its engagement with local stakeholders.

One of the aims of this project was to support schools to shift their understanding of work around parental engagement from a school centred model to one which embraced the value of the home learning environment. Whilst it is still too early to say if the changes we have seen in this project are sustainable and long term, we have good qualitative evidence that this shift has begun to happen.

5.1. Day 1

In filling in the “What we are already doing” forms, schools showed that they were already providing a wide set of opportunities for parents to engage with schools; the majority of these revolved around the school itself (79 of 134 items mentioned). There were some mentions (35) of activities either outside of school, such as “Home visits to reception children” and community events, to instances of home learning, events involving the local community and activity away days.

The “Wishlist” produced by schools during the day, showed a move away from this concentration on the physical setting of the school, although mentions of getting parents in (16) still outweighed those in relation to home based learning (10).

The “Barriers” produced again by schools on the day cover areas predicted by the literature. In some of the comments, there are echoes of a deficit model of parental engagement [5, 39, 40], “Not all parents read the newsletter regularly”, “Mind-set of some parents about school”, “Parents may not attend meeting nor take advice offered” while there was also an awareness of the issues which attitude could cause, “Treading on toes syndrome – not to be seen to be saying that this is the way you should parent – but advice may help you child learn”. Delegates reported a number of times that there may be reluctance among teaching staff to be involved, partially through workload issues, partially through expectations and perceptions they already had of parents, or through a lack of understanding on the part of both staff and parents of the value of parental engagement. There were also, interestingly for a group which contained a number of small schools, comments about not knowing parents/families well, not having clear contact information for families, and lack of knowledge about familial circumstances.

In the evaluations from the day, schools placed a good deal of emphasis (as they did throughout the pilot) on the value of working with other schools, sharing good practice and learning from each other. In looking forward to what they felt would be most useful about the toolkit, schools emphasised its value in keeping parental engagement on the school agenda.

As one of the aims of the pilot was to help schools to move from an emphasis on parental involvement with school to parental engagement with learning, it is worth noting that in the wish list filled in by schools on the first day (Appendix 3), there were 37 stated “wishes” that could be coded in line with the continuum described above. Of these, 8 were related to parental involvement with

school, 17 with parental engagement with schooling and 12 with parental engagement with children's learning. This shows that some of the schools at least had already begun to move toward the most effective forms of parental engagement.

5.2. Day 2

The second away day began with a keynote from Dr Rob Loe, of the Relational Schools Foundation; this presentation emphasised the importance of relationships in schools. The day also included presentations from three schools involved in the project about how they were supporting parental engagement in children's learning. School staff were also given a chance to discuss with each other how the process was going in their school.

The impact of these interventions is clear in the lists schools provided of what they would be doing differently in the future. In this list, it is perhaps not surprising that there was a heavy emphasis on issues around communication. These were mentioned 18 times in the feedback more than twice as often as any other type of activity. Such communication strategies included personalising letters for parents, improvements to newsletters, and an emphasis on face to face communication with parents and families.

These responses were again coded in relation to the continuum. There was again a concentration at the second level; there were 50 responses coded and of these, 5 related to parental involvement with schools, 29 with parental engagement with schooling and 16 to parental engagement with children's learning.

School staff were also asked what they were taking away from the day. These responses, as seen in Appendix 7, were also coded against the continuum. Again, there is a concentration in the middle section. Of the 42 responses which could be coded, 16 referred to the first level, 22 to the second and only 9 to the third.

5.3. Day 3

5.3.1. "Snapshot" and "Journey so Far" analysis

Before and at the final away day, schools completed "Snapshots" of their progress in the pilot; during the day, groups of schools worked together to complete "Our Journey So Far" sheets, which allowed them to list ideas they'd had or tried and the impact these had over the course of the year. The following section shows the analysis of these two sources of data. (As schools worked in groups to complete the "Journey so far" sheets, all quotations from named schools come from the Snapshot data).

The analysis of these data is the best evidence for the impact and effect of the project, as these forms were prepared by the school staff themselves, looking back over the work of the year and forward to the future.

Whiles there was still an emphasis on in-school activities, such as parents' evenings (mentioned 38 times in snapshots), it is interesting that most of the other in-school activities were now focused around supporting parental engagement with learning (such as parents' workshops (14 mentions in snapshots), and family learning activities (mentioned 20 times in snapshots). Seven schools reported increases in parental attendance at such events, "A huge increase" (School 3), "PP (Pupil Premium)

has increased dramatically” (School 7), “Much better ‘turn-out’ at school events”, and “Increased parental engagement at activities (Our Journey). Moreover, there is a clear shift in schools’ views about why parents should be invited into school, as exemplified by one schools’ desire to “Raise the amount of parents attending learning opportunities throughout the school” (School 11 in snapshots).

Schools also highlighted their work around communication with parents (mentioned 31 times overall in snapshots). Schools reported greater confidence among staff in communicating with parents; this goes beyond teaching staff to include, “Governors have set themselves an objective to improve their communication with parents” (School 6). Significantly, there is a clear shift in emphasis, away from communication being a one way flow of information from school to home (shown in the comment from the launch day about the possibility of “treading on toes” when telling parents what they need to know, to a process of discussion and dialogue with parents [41], as well as fostering communication between parents and young people (family means mentioned 11 times, children inviting parents to activities or leading learning 4 times and family learning activities, 20 times in snapshots).

Along with these changes, schools also reported other changes in practice, such as rearranging the timing of events to suit parents, additional training for staff and more release time to work with parents. These changes show a commitment to increasing parental engagement with children’s learning on the part of schools, as does attendance at the away days, as these represent an investment of resources (including teachers’ and senior leaders’ time) which are in increasingly short supply in schools.

There were 42 items coded as having impact in snapshots, wherein schools discussed the impact the project had, for the school, for parents and for children. Within these, there were seven specific mentions of impact for children in receipt of pupil premium.

In the Our Journey So Far feedback, there were 9 items coded as showing impact for schools.

6. Impact of the Project

6.1. Impacts for schools

It is clear from the data that the project supported schools to think through their own processes in relation to parental engagement, and at times to change those processes. There is an emphasis in the literature on the need for work around parental engagement to be a whole-school process; this has come through in some of the data, “All staff have been consulted on their ideas and kept informed of progress, so that it is a whole school approach” (School 9), and that this is having an effect, “...[there is] a growing understanding from staff that some parents need more encouraging and support to support their child at home”(School 3). School leaders have also worked to support staff to see the importance of this process, as some staff were reticent to put in the time needed, for example, for structured conversations with parents⁴, “as well as a lack of confidence in supporting parents with some of the issues that may arise. This was overcome through additional support/training for teachers” (School 8). This again shows the value that schools have placed on parental engagement, in being willing to expend resources to support it. Another school pointed out that staff had volunteered to attend information evenings for parents, (School 6); this demonstrated to parents the importance staff placed on these evenings, as noted by the school, but also a change in the value that staff themselves placed on the meetings.

Schools have also changed some of their own processes to support parents more fully – changing the times of meetings, increasing opportunities for parents to come into school and providing a crèche, changing the nature of reports that go home on the basis of parental feedback and increasing opportunities for teachers to contact parents, such as “All letters from PP manager include email address and now new mobile number” (Our Journey).

On the launch day, one of the perceived values of the pilot was to keep parental engagement “on the school agenda”. It would seem, from the above, that the pilot worked well in this regard.

6.2. Impacts for parents

Although the pilot project did not work directly with parents, the aim of the project overall was to support parents’ engagement with their children’s learning. Schools reported a “huge increase” of parents in attendance at workshops, parents coming forward to work with the school, parents looking forward to sessions at the school. Schools report that parents have more confidence in coming forward to staff about issues and ideas, “more parents approaching PSA for support” (School 9), and, importantly “We have had some success with engaging some parents who would otherwise not have engaged, and others have asked for support who may also previously been reluctant” (School 9). Schools also reported an increase in parents responding to questionnaires, “...usually about 40%. This year 80% of families completed the questionnaire” (Our Journey).

⁴ Structured Conversations with Parents form an integral part of the Achievement for All project. Although the Toolkit is not connected to Achievement for All, some of the schools in the pilot were also taking part in Achievement for All, and combined the two processes.

6.3. Impacts for parental engagement with children's learning and for children

Schools have seen an increase in the number of parents attending family learning sessions, and parents coming to eat and learn alongside their children. One school has added a bit to their weekly newsletter to support family conversations around learning, "The early feedback is that lots of children are having these discussions with parents at home" (School 6). Schools have also seen effects which may seem beyond the range of academic outcomes but which can clearly impact on learning, "...one family purchasing their first ever dining room table so that they now eat together and children have somewhere to do their homework" (School 8)⁵.

6.4. Impact for Pupil Premium students

"PP has improved dramatically over the last 18 months. We have greater attendance at different events, including parents evenings and parent workshops." (School 7)

"We launched a summer challenge for vulnerable children in KS2 to read, write and practice maths regularly throughout the summer holidays. The aim was to give these children the best start when they came back after the long summer break. The children were rewarded with a half day trip to a local farm and to bring a parent along- in recognition that the parents were key in supporting their children with their learning. Feedback from parents of children who completed the challenge was very positive despite the hard slog with their children in some cases. They felt it had helped to keep their skills up and had made the transition back to school much easier than in previous years." (School 8)

Although not all schools targeted their work around children in receipt of FSM, some schools did note positive impacts of the programme with these families. One school reported greater involvement from families on pupil premium (School 5). Another noted, "The PE programme has given PP and PE a voice in school and it has raised the profile of PP children and the need for them to have support. They are now clearly identified on planning and we have appointed a PP TA." (School 5). Another school noted that greater efforts had been made to ensure that these families attended meetings, and, where this was not possible, ensured that parents had access to information and "Teachers phone to speak to those parents and a follow time is offered if that helps" (School 2). Another school has, with the parents, created profile pages for all their students in this group, "This was a great process to learn lots about the child from the parents and also for the parents to realise what we were doing in school for their child" (School 1).

6.5. Overall impact

The impact of the project is most easily seen in schools, rather than in the homes of pupils or directly in pupil outcomes. This is in line with the aims of the pilot as stated at the outset, to support schools to themselves better support parental engagement with children's learning.

⁵ The value of parent/child and familial relationships was emphasised at the second away day, during the Keynote from Dr Rob Loe, of the Relational Schools Foundation.

There is evidence that all schools providing feedback found the project useful; negative feedback on the toolkit project is notable by its absence. Schools engaged with the project well overall, with the exception of the termly evaluation forms.

Schools did, however, readily participate in the away days and in filling in the “Our Journey” and “Snapshot” forms, it may be that these items performed a function for schools as well as for the project, providing an opportunity for reflection and future planning.

7. Limitations

This project took place over just one (calendar) year, and with a small sample of schools in one Local Authority. The time frame means that it is not possible to judge or report longer term effects of the pilot, nor to relate pupil outcomes to the project. Although schools in the project included primary, infant and secondary schools, there were no special schools or pupil referral units involved.

Further, the sample of schools was self-selected. It could be argued that the schools taking part already saw some value in parental engagement with children's learning, and therefore were predisposed to the work suggested in the toolkit.

Evaluation of the toolkit process as noted here relies entirely on school self-report, and takes in only the time frame of the project. The evaluation tool provided in the toolkit did not prove to be of use to the schools involved.

At the centre of the toolkit was a blank action plan, meant to provide schools with a scaffold for their own work. Data was not directly collected on the use of this action plan, although some schools did report that it was a useful aid. Other schools reported moving beyond the framework and incorporating its processes into pre-existing school improvement or development plans.

8. Recommendations

8.1. For further work on the toolkit

1. In any further work involving the toolkit, it will be necessary to ensure that schools have the opportunity to work with each other and share good practice, as schools reported that this was one of the most important aspects of the process.
2. It would be useful to frontload any further toolkits with more information about the differing levels of parental involvement/engagement, so that school staff are clear about the value of the home learning environment and parental engagement in children's learning in the home.
3. Some of the schools who moved furthest along the continuum toward supporting the home learning environment abandoned the action plan section of the toolkit and incorporated this into their existing school development or improvement plans. However, forgoing the action plan exercise might lead to less explicit and clear targets being set, without proper evaluative mechanisms. It might be useful to provide a shortened action plan for incorporation into existing development/improvement plans.

8.2. For Wiltshire and other Local Authorities

1. Continue to foster opportunities for school staff to work together and share their initiatives, both those schools who have been involved in the Pilot and schools who have not, allowing a spread of good practice throughout the Authority.
2. Specific findings from the Pilot to be shared with all other Wiltshire schools to build on existing good practice
3. Develop a commitment to extending the focus on Parental Engagement through the work of the Relational Schools Project
4. Provide additional input to support schools, through Family Learning and other initiatives, that will specifically scaffold disadvantaged parent carers to help their children and young people in relation to literacy/Phonics, numeracy etc.
5. Consider ways in which the impact of promoting this agenda might be monitored across the local authority, ultimately in terms of the effect on raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils

5.1. For schools

1. The schools that benefitted most from this project incorporated the work from the toolkit into their school development/improvement plans. Doing this means that work for parental engagement is not seen as an add on to work in school but rather becomes an embedded aspect of practice.
2. Schools found great value in working with each other, benefitting from the practice of their peers. It is recommended that schools share good and innovative practice with other local institutions.

3. Schools in the toolkit process struggled to evaluate the impact of their innovations. When embarking on new work in this area, it is recommended that schools consider how they will evaluate the impact of their work, including timeframes and success criteria.
4. It is recommended that schools consider staff training about the value, nature and impact of parental engagement with children's learning, to support any necessary changes in staff beliefs, attitudes and actions. In light of Recommendation 2, this could be offered as joint training within groups of schools.
5. The work of most of the schools in the project, including those who saw the greatest impact, was led by senior members of staff. It is recommended that all such work emanate from the senior leadership/management team [14].

5.2. For policy

1. Few school staff involved in the project had any prior training around parental engagement in children's learning, and none mentioned having encountered these ideas during their initial teacher training. It is recommended that training around the value, nature and impact of parental engagement form an integral part of curricula for initial teacher training, and for ongoing training of serving teachers.
2. Although parental involvement is mandated in Scotland [42] and clearly supported in Wales [43], there is no concomitant English mandate or support. Ofsted no longer inspects parental engagement in schools, although it continues to do so for early years settings [44]; combined, this lack of direction and inspection does little to signal the value and impact of parental engagement with children's learning, in spite of the clear benefits it can bring, as evidenced through the literature and again through this project. It is recommended that Policy makers attend to this gap as matter of urgency, to highlight the value of parental engagement to school practitioners.

2.1. For research

1. Schools struggled to find information about effective innovations to support parental engagement in children's learning outside of discussions with each other. It is recommended that research be undertaken to collect and collate current practice in schools across the country.

Appendix 1. List of schools in Toolkit Pilot Project

Aloeric Primary School
Bemerton St John
By Brook Valley
Castle Mead Primary Academy
Castle, Ludgershall
Charter Primary
Colerne
Corsham Primary
Derry Hill
Five Lanes
Greentrees
Harnham Infant
King's Lodge
Larkhill
Longford
Lyneham
Morgan's Vale and Woodfalls
Neston
Paxcroft Primary School
River Mead
Sarum St Paul's
St Martin's, Salisbury
St Patrick's RC, Corsham
The Manor
The Mead
Walwayne Court
Wilton and Barford
Abbeyfield
Devizes
Hardenhuish
St Edmund's, Salisbury
Stonehenge School
Wellington

Appendix 2. What we're already doing Launch of Toolkit for Parental Engagement, January 18, 2016

In school

Parent workshops (magical maths, English, computing)
Assemblies to celebrate and share learning
Parents' evening
Meet the teacher
Open classrooms once a term – parents to look at books
Grandparents day
Meet the teacher meeting in September
Class assemblies
AFA achievement for all
Subject workshops and follow—on demonstration lessons Community assemblies (guest speakers)
Celebration assemblies
Class assemblies
“Well done” invites for families
Opportunities for parents to celebrate children's learning: garden party, show, etc.
Workshops – reading, maths
CommuniTEA EVENINGS – first Saturday of every month get together
Parents invited for maths and muffins sessions
Parents' evening and data
Meet greet parents morning
Showcasing arts, music and drama
Visitors into school
Family learning mornings
Parents workshops during school and evening
Stay and play mornings
Reading 'party' (FS2)
Parent information evenings
Parents' evenings – computers out for 'parent view'
Parent child lunch
EYFS induction/transition
Teddy bears' picnic for new parents and children reading focus FS2
'Show and share' parents come in and share children's books with their child
Parents invited to observe lessons.
Female relatives invited into school on Mothers' Monday – male relatives on Fathers' Friday
Termly rewards assemblies with parents/families invited to attend
Homework club for families
Careers day – parents come and talk about what they do at work
Having a place where parents can come and ask questions and seek support informally – café once a week with PSA
Celebration assembly weekly
Sharing assembly
Inspire mornings – parents/grandparents working with their children in a round robin of activities
Parents invited in weekly to celebrate their child's achievements
European day of languages – parents invited to share their experiences/talents/food/music with classes
Structures conversations
Workshops eg reading maths
Parent workshops on special needs/bedtime routines/speech and language, etc

Teacher-parent meetings offered throughout day and evening
 Celebration assemblies – parents welcome
 Parent workshops – EYFS, maths, reading , phonics
 Staff on the gate at beginning and the end of the day
 Volunteer readers – parents, grandparents
 SDLT out on front playground every day to talk to parents and children
 Volunteer meetings – encourage and inform parents/carers about how they can support children in class
 Maths games day – parents spend the morning playing maths games/problem solving with their children
 Celebration worship – parents welcome
 Get parents into parents evening – good attendance – phone, etc. Weekly celebration assemblies to celebrate children’s successes
 100% attendance at parent consultation meetings Foundation stage workshops – well attended
 Approachable reception and friendly first contact
 Visiting speakers for parents, eg Dr Tom Robson – ‘how to help your child fly’ Parents information Golden assemblies
 Why parent? Parent group led by Dr Lynda Mallory
 Pride in our school days (including Saturdays)
 Visible on the playground
 Workshops for parents – building children’s self-esteem – reading – phonics – etc
 Parents’ evening with crèche
 Fabulous Finish each term/topic for parents to attend Fabulous Finishes – celebration of children’s learning at the end of units
 Open afternoons
 Year 9 student and parent weekly reading workshops
 Being available in the playground EVERY day for parents to be able to talk to
 Mini workshops – maths, reading, EYFS
 Volunteers welcome! Reading – forest school – trips/walks, etc – cooking
 Opportunity to come in to see children’s learning
 Sporting Oscars and sports day – parents invited
 ?workshops eg paired reading followed by class visits to see in action Curriculum evening on theme – summer term Workshops run by staff for parents to do/make/explore with children
 Class assemblies
 Parents invited to awards – prefects, etc.
 Church services
 AGAT – ‘How to get an A’ workshops and Reach for the Stars parent workshops
 Tea at 2 pm with the SLT once a term – with a focus – ie assessment Workshops for parents
 Questionnaires and follow ups to get them in Welcome volunteers to help in class
 AIM workshops
 Christingle/art workshop
 Availability and contactability of staff and tutors, progress, leaders, SLT
 Parent conversations/consultations

Outside of school

Parents supporting each other with common needs and issues Home visits to reception children in September
 Home visits FS2
 Community events
 Home learning
 Home learning club – parents invited in to support children – HT leads club and supports parents to support their child

Dad'/kids/ activity day at Brokerswood (weekend)
Home visits
Link created with children's centre and joint workshops planned
Providing parents with resources to use at home
Home learning activities involving parents – making an underwater scene together, a castle, an igloo
Send books home prior to parents' evenings for parents to share with children
Family learning – with LA
Reward parents who read with their children
Reading army

Changes to school work/infrastructure

Parental engagement 'community of practice' (staff CPD and Focus group) exploring ideas, etc.
PSA support
Committed to change re parental engagement
Workshares
Employed own PSA

Other

Heads of house close working relationship
"Acceleread"
TAC meetings
PSA role
Clear boundaries and setting high expectations to foster independence

Communication

Share information, dates, events, deadlines
Translation of key documents for EAL parents – eg, attendance, curriculum
PTA, Parent voice
Explaining why we do things or ask parents to do things Website photos, spellings, theme webs, videos of learning
Website
Regular feedback - newsletters, parents evenings, texting
Sharing homework with parents (show my homework)
Parent voice questionnaires
Twitter feed
Parents questionnaires
Communication – website, text, newsletters
Blog
Using certain ICT packages such as 'show my homework'
Weekly newsletter – learners of the week and children who have special mentions for significant steps Parent questionnaires
Text with good news and reminders – main way of communicating School comms is fab for sending information – how to revise year 11 Weekly newsletter emailed to parents
Good news phone calls – teachers call for positive news
HT goes to traveller site to try to engage with parents
Website Wednesday – Parents in to access class bogs, etc
Website
Insight and parent log on to monitor behaviour and school comms
Photograph work and text/email home
Phone hard to reach parents about parents evening
Online homework with supporting videos
VLE
Twitter – post one photo per class each day

Having a place where parents can come and ask questions and seek support informally – café once a week with PSA
Planners – comments, photos

Appendix 3. School 'wish lists' - Launch of Toolkit for Parental Engagement, January 18, 2016

Parents in school

Parents want to come to school
Getting all parents into school to meet their child's teachers
Meet with all PP parents throughout the school year
Ensure all PP parents attend parents' evening
Individual attendance meetings for <90%
Phonics party for parents
Support families – meet and greet
100% attendance
Children invite for events
Introduce family homework club
Purposeful parent evenings
Parents to take up involvement invitations
Phonics tests recent issues
Parents meetings during day
Maths workshops
All parents attend parents' evening

Home learning - out of school

Education does not end at 3:00
Make use of community resources – Sainsbury's/ sports centre
Parents are supported through school website
Video demos for homework
Tweeting pictures of learning
Get message across – home learning is important
Photo of PP manager included on specific letters
Ask parents: what can we do to help?
Learning concepts from school to home vice versa
Family learning

Communication

Parents share celebrations with us as well as problems
Two-way dialogue
Thanking parents for positives
More contact with parents
Issues/concerns raised by parents are effectively and quickly addressed
All staff are good at/have positive relationships with parents
All parents know who they can go to re any issues/comfortable
Speak to parents whose children are not on track
Access all parents
All children have at least one celebratory post card a new term
School knows all parents/home circumstances
Keep building a rapport, clear communication

Other

Parents who want to engage
Perspective – New Head!
Shared approach – partnership with parents and school
Raising aspirations
Parents' focus group

Parents showing an interest in learning
Embed book rewards
All staff to see parents as partners
Parent involvement with transition
Parent support group
Greater diversity at parent voice meetings
Regular social events
Working parents
Maths – literacy – change in parents
Revision box
Parents making an informed choice
Strong links between home and setting. All stakeholders understand the barriers
Parents able to make informed choices
Provide extra support for yr 2/6 parents
Improve links with secondary schools
Parent helpers are used to support PP as much as possible
Provide targeted support

Appendix 4. Barriers to parental engagement face by Schools Launch of Toolkit for Parental Engagement, January 18, 2016

Parents

Access to internet at home – encouraging parents to access
Finance – both school and families
Transport, funding * parental needs, issues
Cost of books
Teacher/ parent relationships
Not all parents may respond to the notification that the event is on
Parents may not attend meeting nor take advice offered
May not be sustainable – asking what did you learn today?
Parents may be unclear about what we are asking
Parents may not fully comprehend how much impact they can have
Society of parents and location
Not all parents read newsletter regularly

Time

Parent working hours and family life
Parents working
Timing – persuading parents to come in
Lack of shared information
Time scale – long term Environment

Parental attitudes/perceptions

Expectations
Teacher/parent expectations
Parent/pupil perceptions
Confidence of parents
Parent expectations versus school expectations
Assumptions
Parents' experiences - good and bad
Different socioeconomic backgrounds
Mind-set of some parents about school
Parents' level of education or their perception of it
Negative experiences in parents' education –
Parents may be reluctant to participate/ not all views represented
Preconceived ideas
Younger siblings and lack of confidence, peer pressure of other parents
Schools feel like a bit of an 'empire'
Preconceived ideas about what school is like
Knowledge of secondary school and not making an informed choice
Good links maintained

Staff

New Headteacher (also opportunity!)
Opportunities for communication – missed opportunities – eg webpage
Jargon – letters checked 100% commitment?
Lack of shared information
Getting secondary schools on board

Resources

Time management

Cost to release teachers will impact on other priorities
Time required to invest in parental engagement on top of heavy workload
Time
Time/logistics, etc.
£££
Time for staff to meet parents independently
Cost
Time to run sessions
Cost of resources and teacher time
Finance – both school and families
Not enough teachers are familiar with twitter

Attitude, perception

Teachers may be reluctant to be filmed + plethora of possibilities
Teachers may not have time or appreciate the value – parents may be reluctant to attend
Teachers may be reluctant to divert learning time to invite making
Mind-set shift
Teacher/parent expectations
Support SLT, Governors
Staff perceptions
Getting colleagues on board with importance of investing in parental engagement.
Teacher/parent expectations
Teacher/ parent relationships
Treading on toes syndrome – not to be seen to be saying that this is the way you should parent –
but advice may help your child learn
Parent expectations versus school expectations
Staff attitude – not all on board
Staff attributes
Identifying the barriers – people take on responsibly and work through it
School not knowing parents/home circumstances
Not knowing families and circumstances
Staff can be defensive, because they are passionate - they are part of the school
SLT seeing the importance and finding the time
Not knowing what parents need
Knowing who to go to – which adults is responsible for what
Not knowing all parents or best way to contact them
Thinking outside the box needs to be for a reason – what is it?
Timescale of progress – it will take time to change culture to make a difference

Appendix 5. Evaluations from Launch of Toolkit for Parental Engagement, January 18, 2016

Which parts of the event will be most useful to you?

The most valuable parts of the day were dialogue with other colleagues and the input from experts in their field.

Finding out what schools are doing to get to know their PP parents including their feelings needs etc. and the most effective way to implement this within the school

Having the opportunity to talk to other professionals and sharing good practice.

Opportunity to stop and reflect

Sharing good practice

Going through the different elements of the toolkit

Listening to others and their experiences. Understanding about how the pilot will work and what is expected of schools

Sharing of ideas and use of discussion. There were some practical ideas I have taken away that I will be implementing immediately

Having a clear understanding of parental involvement and engagement and which agencies to call on for support.

Some of the evidence behind why we should be working on increasing parental engagement- this will help in sharing the vision with colleagues, and parents.

The 'where are we now?' part of the toolkit to prompt discussion with colleagues, and the 'wish list' for reflection with SLT

Meeting with other colleagues and the toolkit. Sharing of ideas.

Which parts of the event will be least useful to you?

Would have been useful to have more concrete ideas/case studies about what has worked to increase parental engagement and ultimately standards. Then the opportunity to consider how these could be adapted for our own schools.

Some of the presentation information had been mentioned before at the PP Conference- eg. family learning.

The size of the room!! Nothing else.

Some of the discussions were more primary school orientated. Still useful, but not completely relevant to my setting

Depends which SLT members take on this project and drive it forward with passion and enthusiasm. I thought there would have been more answers and new ideas to try.

In what ways will your school, pupils, parents and staff benefit as a result of having attended this event?

Hopefully it will encourage us to re-look at the issues surrounding parental engagement and consider other ways to engage our parents

School: Feel confident that we know our PP parents and can attend to their needs in order to ensure that they are supporting their child effectively

Parent: Gain a better relationship with me as the Pupil Premium Manager and feel confident to share ideas / concerns etc. with the Pupil Premium manager / school.

Develop ideas in which they can support their child

Feel more confident in supporting their child

Pupil: Feel supported

Someone to share any anxieties with

Improve attainment and Progress!

Focus on moving from parental involvement to parental engagement in learning.

Specific section on SDP to focus to ensure remains on agendas.

Solidifies our commitment to improve our work on PE.

We will move away from thinking how we attract parents into school to how do we engage parents outside of school

I have already set up a working group, we are meeting on Monday to make plans for the year.

Hopefully with more awareness over importance of parental engagement.

Staff training and discussions will be highlighting the importance, and a number of new sessions will be planned to support this.

Having a clear understanding of parental involvement and engagement and which agencies to call on for support hopefully leading to a higher level of parental engagement and staff enthusiasm to try and get it.

It will help us to evaluate where we are in terms of parental engagement and to clarify priorities for our school and how to get there. Being part of the project will also help to keep parental engagement at the forefront of my mind and to share that with colleagues so that we move forward with our aims.

We are going to try and look into trialling some of the ideas from the day.

What are you planning to do, as a result of attending this event?

I will be meeting with my head to highlight and identify some areas which need improving and plan interventions we could put in place to improve parental engagement

Ensure that all Pupil Premium parents attend Parent's Evening / opportunities to discuss their pupil's progress

Develop links specifically with Year 2 and Year 6 parents, ensuring that they are aware of the end of year expectations and the SATs (less formal for Year 2)

Ensure that all classes have parent helpers where appropriate and are being used to support Pupil Premium children with their reading skills

Carry out a parent audit to assess their views and how we can work together develop the support
Explore options of meeting parents outside of school – Corsham Community / Sainsbury Learning room

Develop Study Buddies – 'Study Buddies Six' inviting parents to join us six times a year

Improve communication with parents through a photo of myself added to any letters in which I send out, email address available, text message service

Ensure opportunities for non-threatening involvement to allow parents to build confidence e.g. family workshops on drumming, crafts etc. , board game borrowing club, family homework club.

Look to targeting engagement with YR and Y1 parents in September 2016- set expectations and opportunities early in school life- transition, introduce home visits and family learning opportunities.

Translate key documents for EAL parents and see if we can have EMAS support at parents' evenings
Link role of PSA with induction and attendance.

Sharing info with Link Governor. Consider how we spend our PP funding and consider restructuring staffing roles to engage more with parents - particularly disadvantaged.

Structured conversations with parents in different environments

See above, the project will be aimed at current year 6 and working with our primaries to build on the parental contact they have

Some family learning activities

Look at KS2-3 transition and parental support

Look at timings of parents' evening

Invite parents in to rewards assemblies

Involve parents in more events at the school

Highlight this as a key objective across the school

feed back to the SLT and whole staff at a PDM and get EVERYONE involved in making a whole school plan - not just the person who went on the course.

We are currently immersed in initiating structured conversations as part of the AFA program, but have reached some barriers with staff in terms of understanding why parental engagement is worth

investing time in and having the confidence to engage directly with parents. This event has provided me with some evidence/ background I can share with colleagues.

Longer term to use the toolkit with SLT to identify the next phase towards improving parental engagement – at a whole school level.

Complete the toolkit and evaluate what we currently do as a school. Meet with parents Forum and discuss some of the ideas.

Who else should attend?

This course would be useful for teachers SLT, TAS and anyone wishing to look at pupil /parent engagement in schools. I think this initial course was particularly important for school leadership to attend as parental engagement requires a whole school approach.

Yes to other Pupil Premium staff but not perhaps to other staff within the school

Yes. I think it could be useful for English and Maths subject leaders to aid their understanding in the issues around parental engagement- that parents usually do want to help their children but need support in equipping them to do so

Admin staff and parent governors

Yes- for schools that want to revisit this agenda hand have the opportunity and time to reflect.

Yes- pastoral leaders, vulnerable learner leaders, SENDCOs

I would like all schools to be doing something like this

Needs more specific guidance on what works re PE. Dos and Don'ts, how to use PP funding in respect of PE.

Yes

SLT as it is about changing school culture

yes, my SLT and in particular the SENCo team because they already have knowledge of many agencies and have an understanding of family histories and stories.

Other comments

As a non SLT member it was really useful to meet SLT members from local schools and network, sharing ideas. The presentation style and format was brilliant, I wish my lessons took on more of these ideas! Thank you

Appendix 6. What schools are going to do differently – Away Day May 13, 2016

Remove the stigma attached to "pupil premium" through education of pupils/staff/parents

Share with governing body

Transition

Parental action plan

Be brave

Aim to engage 'disengaged' parents not just 'disadvantaged'

Build on our existing good practice and be brave to keep trying new ideas

I will visit St Edmund's - the only school where students are fully aware they are PP, and aim to put something into a closing the gap newsletter re the positive value of transparency in this area

Lots of great suggestions from other schools how to get engagement - engage with parents at parents' evenings instead of sending forms home (and then never coming back)

Great suggestions from all other schools and hope our school can start to implement some of them

In school

'All about me' form for new starters

Think about personalising invitations to workshops

One page profiles as a starting point at parents' evening

Getting children to send invites out to parents

Look at structured conversations for PP parents - current use this with SEN parents. Using this style for parents evening

Look into child-led workshops for parents

Learning workshops

Books and Bacon

Move to develop learning workshops (lots of PTA/social events established)

Child inviting and running workshops - teaching them

Morning greetings of parents

Open afternoons

Promote events within the school with parents, to encourage attendance

Continue to welcome families during early morning playground duty - keep communication going

Ask teachers to consider not talking to each other at parents evening etc. Rather talk to parents and children, as it is intimidating

Weekly drop-in sessions for parents

Encourage the school to become the centre of the community

Add-ons to successful events - workshops to start celebration assemblies

Reading group (after school) to include parents

Interest hour (through Rob Loe's talk)

Involving parents on day 1 of a topic to launch it

Children write invitations for parental workshops

Stop and play sessions

Books and bacon - will consider setting this up

More time with the parents after/before school

Morning reading clubs

Computerised parents' evening appointments

Ensure 100% classroom of acceptance

Increased opportunity for parents to come into the classroom/school with no agenda other than being with their child

Electronic signup sheet for parents' evening

Children write invitations to parents/carers for events

Open library in the morning for parents to work with children

Out of school

Target specific parents for school trips
Set up visits to parents to talk about issues in school
Offsite meetings?
Home visits for new children
Consider home visits for children new to the school - already do for FS2
Home visits for all new starters and not just EYFS
Offering home visits to any child/family new to the school not just in EYFS

Communication Relationships

Thank yous/staff member of the week on newsletters
Personalise letters
Texting parents with photos of good work
Year 7 proud letters from parents to children
Start a move to more positive relationships between staff/parents - time to meet/talk?
Personalised letters
Continue to welcome families during early morning playground duty - keep communication going
To encourage improved bonding between teachers and parents particularly with our more inexperienced staff
Establish good relationships and TRUST with parents before trying to make changes
Mail merge parents' names onto letters to make more personal
Tip of the week - on newsletters to give parents advice on engaging with their children at home with learning
Prioritise relationships between teacher and children; make these deeper and broader
Make sure that children's diaries are read by school staff daily - this will aid communication
Develop relationship school work discussions with my staff team
Messages from parents/teachers
Personalised parent letters
Home learning and diaries need to be looked at more
Speak to teachers

Appendix 7. What schools were taking away - Away Day May 13, 2016

A deeper understanding of parental engagement and how to develop it in school

A focus on the nature and impact of the connections within our school

Different ways of engaging groups of parents

Getting to know you

Ideas to develop parental engagement

Little and often - do not overwhelm parents.

Meet parent/gov to develop action plan for trying this project

Take a risk - try new things

We're doing a good job

In school

Year 9 reading group

Bacon butties - Books and Bacon

Children send out invitations

Children to write invites to parents for school events

Structured conversations

Parents to use the library and computer suites at the beginning of the day

Parents sharing topic mornings (aiding family to engage in topic at home)

Parental reading groups to work together to support readers below CA in reading

Parent surgery - 1/2 day with HT, DHT, speakers and cake

Super starters with parents at the start of the term

Parents using school library/computer suite

Inviting parents into school to share talents/career etc.

Inspire mornings - a range of activities for a class and parents - round robin

Invitations from children

Communication - Relationships

Totally new understanding on how relationships affect learning. Inspirational

To encourage improvement in Y6 relationships between boys and girls before transition

Becoming a relational school

Building relationships/seeing the school as the family

Connections and a sense of family within our school

Developing relationships - getting all staff on board

Encourage staff to think about what they can do to improve relationships with more difficult children

How to create a community

I liked the idea of school as a household/family

The importance of building relationships

The importance of building relationships

The importance of building relationships - if teacher/child relationship isn't there then parents will not be engaged.

The importance of relationships within the school and the impact that has throughout a child's life

The need to invest in means to develop relationships

Time is the currency of relationships

Thank parents in newsletters

Tip of the week on newsletters

Tip of the week for parental engagement on newsletter

Including tip of the week... in newsletter

Inspirational speaker: Rob Loe - lots of sensible input re motivation, multiplexity and children feeling connected

Mail merge technology - letters to parents

Rob Loe's presentation - well delivered, dynamic, engaging and informative

Rob Loe - speaker - teachers relationships and children

Reminded that it is about relationships and all else flows from that

Relationships!

The impact that relationships have on academic progress

The fact that relationships between teacher/parent and the child are important for the child's achievement

That we are not alone in our journey of parental relationship building

Perception of support = support!

Parent's tips on newsletters

Working with other schools

Similarity between schools in all areas

Other schools are in the same position trying to engage parents within the school and their child's learning

New ideas from other primary schools - children writing invites

Networking with schools

Appendix 8. What schools said they were taking away Away Day – January 16, 2017

Father's Friday – fathers feeling invisible and how we can address this
Ask parents 'what can we do to support you' at parent consultations
To get more dads involved plus army males
How parental engagement starts from birth (even if the school can't affect it!?!)
Ideas to develop engaging parents having discussed ideas with the secondary team
Useful links for further reference = networking
BOATS – consider introducing in our school (Brining Adults Into Our Schools – Scotland)
Phonics workshops – engaging Dads in early education
Thanking parents at the start of a newsletter
Different ways to reach those parents you really want to target
Phonic workshop = idea about other schools
Strategies for working with dads and families
Spelling and phonic workshops in small chunks
'Someone special day'
Engaging parents in phonics
Look at how many dads are engaging already and consider how we can expand on this
Continue with our focus on targeting groups of parents to become more involved in their children's education
Some good examples of continuing to improve PE at Derry Hill School
Get more Dads involved – following input from Rita (+army volunteers)
The need to get a male role model more involved
The hand image from Christ Church – opportunity, practice, expectations, knowledge, celebration – do we provide all for this? What weighting?
Father's Friday
Ideas for workshops
The thought that we must maintain links to parents even when we feel it hard to do so
Questions for us about how we use the viewpoints of the children and how we engage fathers especially letting fathers be the visible carer

Appendix 9. Something I found particularly good/useful – Away Day 16 January 2017

Really good to hear from other schools about their approach. Also good to hear where is happening in the other home nations. Will definitely look at websites.

Use of digital images at home.

Interesting to hear what is happening in Scotland

Encouraging fathers

Chance to talk with representatives from other schools

The info about Scotland and Wales – useful links and resources

The secondary 'Costa' chat!

MAP – workbook

Janet's session was very thought provoking

Strategies/ideas for Father's Friday

The feedback from the two schools and how they have embraced "parental engagement".

Also the snapshots from other schools

Involving parents with phonics

Networking

Educational aspects from Wales and Scotland

Phonics talk from Christ Church School

Finding out how others are encouraging parents

Parental engagement in phonics ideas

Reading other schools' snapshots

Thanking parents in the weekly newsletter – really good idea to do weekly

Ideas to use back at school

Input from Christ Church school, Bradford-on-Avon

How other schools have tried to encourage more parents

Will follow up web links to Scottish practices

Parent workshops and invitation ideas

Talking to other teachers/ gops/PSAs about what they do or have done

Allowing time for reflection

Opportunities to share and learn from others both across the country and across the primary and secondary phases

Chance to talk to colleagues

Presentations from experts and other schools

Father Friday

Online resources from Scotland and Wales

What's happening in Scotland

Appendix 10. What else would have been helpful? Away Day 16 January 2017

Further information and advice on engaging disadvantaged families and hard to reach families
The most effective ways of engaging disadvantaged parents
Planning our next steps
Time to brainstorm/generate ideas
Listen to experts
More focus on secondary schools
More emphasis on secondary
Break out sessions with other secondary teachers
Other ideas to engage further more effectively, especially PP families
Involving Dads
Practical knowledge on how to deal with tricky parental situations
Discussion with colleagues
Reading through snap shots was useful to see what others were doing but this was a long session
More of the practical advice on Father's Friday as well as research
A list of ideas other schools have done and a possible contact list
Talking to similar schools
Time to reflect and discuss before the question sessions
How we can get the parents/dads in video showed secure attachments. How do we capture other families

Appendix 11. Our journey so far Away Day 16 January 2017

Some of these things seem basic when written down, however the process/through about these things has heled involve/support parent involvement since joining the project
Kick start new thoughts!

In school

Re-establish PTA-To get more parents involved to restart

Crèche-More parents able to attend (pushchairs)

Meeting with child minders-Homework help

All parents involved-Grandparents tea party

Bring an adult to school

Involving males-Male role models especially for those where there I no male at home

Involving males-Motivate the boys that reading is OK (Asking that men do read – arrange for males to come and read)

Annual phonics session for parents – -now part of our ‘systems and procedures’

Provide a crib sheet for teachers for parents’ meeting -teachers now ask at every parents’ meeting- what can we do to support you? What would you like from the school?

Having parents’ meetings during the school day-Now parents can choose whether they come during the day or to an evening meeting

Children take personal invites home – written by pupils with photograph- Much better ‘turn-out’ at school events e.g. phonics party

Continue the structured conversation element of our work-

Continue funding one day a week disadvantaged champion-

A continued focus on targeted support for disadvantaged families-Continue to target the support using our disadvantaged lead

Head and deputy out more first and last thing-We hope this will result in more engagement on a day to day basis with the head and deputy

Text message reminders-Increased parental engagement at activities

EYFS staggered entrance-EAL and younger children started school first leading to them settling quicker

Monthly maths workshops-Regular occurrence so parents talk and encourage others to attend

Open classrooms -Resources given to parents to work at home with children

Revise parents’ evening-We looked at what parents were told, needed to know at parents evenings and tried to make meetings similar across the school

Use pupil voice – information written by children-Invitations for specific events written by pupils (Rohl Dahl day/Christmas Fair, etc.)

Focus on parental engagement in achievement for all programme-The school as recently achieved the achievement for all quality mark. Our work with disadvantaged pupils and families was highlighted as a clear strength. We have achieved the quality mark a s a result.

Targeted family learning sessions for parents-In collaboration with parent support adviser and family learning team, workshops on maths and English spanning over the whole year and ongoing. Really good attendance and sustained attendance.

All teachers completing structured conversations with parents-The teachers all completed structured conversations. The teachers were able to reach parents who often do not attend parents evenings. We have had an increased participation of disadvantages parents as a result.

Class assembly introduced-Re-introduced class assembly in school so parents are all invited to see children’s work in an assembly

Support PTA more-School as ‘trusted PTA to lead more in events (Disco/Science Fair/etc.) and accepted changes this has meant

Identifying improving school links-Sometimes involving pupils to invite/show round/present to parents Is still a little 'ad hoc' – it would be good to set up a 'non-negotiable' list that means that – for example: If you are inviting parents to your class to see something then the invites are written by the child, etc.

Closer work with forces families-Not necessarily 'disadvantaged' children but general word of mouth helps develop communication/relationships with all parents

Family learning-Specific parents invited to attend workshops involving outside agencies – keeping up with your child in maths/English

Better relationships with parents-Pupil Premium manager

Investigate Military Dads – -95% military housing and All 'fathers' – how does this affect children?

Open the school library to parents 8.30 – 8.50 am-Engaging parents in reading with their child

Invite parents'/grandparents to lunch once every long term-Build up parents' confidence in coming to school in a social capacity. Open up lines of communication in a "non-threatening" way

Home learning

Providing helpful information-Newsletters have a 'recommended website of the week' every week *using 'common sense media')

Reward for reading-Every pupils receives a book for their home personal library if they have read at home every night throughout the term

Saying 'Thank you' -Every newsletter now starts with a 'Thank you parents' paragraph – e.g. thank you for coming to parents' meetings, thank you for reading with your child

Continue home visits for foundation stage

Open classrooms -Resources given to parents to work at home with children

Targeted family learning sessions for parents-In collaboration with parent support adviser and family learning team, workshops on maths and English spanning over the whole year and ongoing. Really good attendance and sustained attendance.

PSA to offer workshops-Better family routines – children at school on time

Communication

Inform parents of phonic screening -- but not stress children

Providing helpful information-Newsletters have a 'recommended website of the week' every week *using 'common sense media')

Saying 'Thank you' -Every newsletter now starts with a 'Thank you parents' paragraph – e.g. thank you for coming to parents' meetings, thank you for reading with your child

Tweeting suggested at first meeting-'computing lead' now regularly tweets

Continue the structured conversation element of our work-

Head and deputy out more first and last thing-We hope this will result in more engagement on a day to day basis with the head and deputy

Thank you element on the weekly newsletter to parents-We hope this will result in even more positivity from parents

Weekly newsletter to parents-We introduced a weekly newsletter, usually, 10x a year. This has resulted in more information reaching a wider audience. We also repeat information so that parents get the information in a variety of forms.

More parents completed parent questionnaires by creating a more open culture for parents-We had an issue with getting parents to complete the questionnaire., usually about 40% This year 80% of families completed the questionnaire.

Text message reminders-Increased parental engagement at activities

Revise newsletter-Office staff asked to review newsletter to see 'positive' spin/dates/communication

Edited pupil reports-Decision to reduce amount of foundation stage writing in reports as parents explained that they are more interested in behaviour/personality side of report

Use of texting-School has tried much harder to keep parents involved through texting

Family support assistant-Ability to reach/support more families

-Meet/greet parents on the playground

-All letters from PP manager include email address and now new mobile number

Timetables parents meetings-Set up whole year 'parent meeting' timetable – so things are less 'ad hoc' – i.e. phonics meeting on specific dates, etc.

SMT to be more visible/available at beginning of day-Timetable for SMT to meet parents in mornings before school – be visible and available

Appendix 12. Our journey so far - Impacts– from Away Day 16
January 2017

Idea/Action	Result/Impact
Text message reminders	Increased parental engagement at activities
EYFS staggered entrance	EAL and younger children started school first leading to them settling quicker
Monthly maths workshops	Regular occurrence so parents talk and encourage others to attend
Open classrooms	Resources given to parents to work at home with children
Revise newsletter	Office staff asked to review newsletter to see 'positive' spin/dates/communication
Revise parents' evening	We looked at what parents were told, needed to know at parents evenings and tried to make meetings similar across the school
Use pupil voice – information written by children	Invitations for specific events written by pupils (Rohlf Dahl day/Christmas Fair, etc.)
Edited pupil reports	Decision to reduce amount of foundation stage writing in reports as parents explained that they are more interested in behaviour/personality side of report
Support PTA more	School as 'trusted PTA to lead more in events (Disco/Science Fair/etc.) and accepted changes this has meant
Class assembly introduced	Re-introduced class assembly in school so parents are all invited to see children's work in an assembly
Use of texting	School has tried much harder to keep parents involved through texting
Kick start new thoughts!	
Identifying improving school links	Sometimes involving pupils to invite/show round/present to parents Is still a little 'ad hoc' – it would be good to set up a 'non-negotiable' list that means that – for example: If you are inviting parents to your class to see something then the invites are written by the child, etc.
SMT to be more visible/available at beginning of day	Timetable for SMT to meet parents in mornings before school – be visible and available
Timetables parents' meetings	Set up whole year 'parent meeting' timetable – so things are less 'ad hoc' – i.e. phonics meeting on specific dates, etc.
Investigate Military Dads –	95% military housing and All 'fathers' – how does this affect children?
Better relationships with parents	Pupil premium manager
	All letters from PP manager include email address and now new mobile number
	Meet/greet parents on the playground
Family support assistant	Ability to reach/support more families
Family learning	Specific parents invited to attend workshops involving outside agencies – keeping up with your child in maths/English

Closer work with forces families	Not necessarily 'disadvantaged' children but general word of mouth helps develop communication/relationships with all parents
All teachers completing structured conversations with parents	The teachers all completed structured conversations. The teachers were able to reach parents who often do not attend parents evenings. We have had an increased participation of disadvantages parents as a result.
Targeted family learning sessions for parents	In collaboration with parent support adviser and family learning team, workshops on maths and English spanning over the whole year and ongoing. Really good attendance and sustained attendance.
Focus on parental engagement in achievement for all programme	The school as recently achieved the achievement for all quality mark. Our work with disadvantaged pupils and families was highlighted as a clear strength. We have achieved the quality mark as a result.
More parents completed parent questionnaires by creating a more open culture for parents	We had an issue with getting parents to complete the questionnaire., usually about 40% This year 80% of families completed the questionnaire.
Weekly newsletter to parents	We introduced a weekly newsletter, usually, 10x a year. This has resulted in more information reaching a wider audience. We also repeat information so that parents get the information in a variety of forms.
Thank you element on the weekly newsletter to parents	We hope this will result in even more positivity from parents
Head and deputy out more firs and last thing	We hope this will result in more engagement on a day to day basis with the head and deputy
A continued focus on targeted support for disadvantaged families	Continue to target the support using our disadvantaged lead
Continue funding one day a week disadvantaged champion	
Continue the structured conversation element of our work	
Continue home visits for foundation stage	
Children take personal invites home – written by pupils with photograph	Much better 'turn-out] at school events eg phonics party
Tweeting suggested at first meeting	'computing lead' now regularly tweets
Saying 'Thank you'	Every newsletter now starts with a 'Thank you parents' paragraph – e.g. thank you for coming to parents' meetings, thank you for reading with your child
Having parents' meetings during the school day	Now parents can choose whether they come during the day or to an evening meeting
Provide a crib sheet for teachers for parents' meeting	teachers now ask at every parents' meeting- what can we do to support you? What would you like from the school?
Reward for reading	Every pupils receives a book for their home personal library if they have red at home every night throughout the term
Providing helpful information	Newsletters have a 'recommended website of the week' every week *using 'common sense media')

Annual phonics session for parents –	now part of our 'systems and procedures'
Involving males	Motivate the boys that reading is OK (Asking that men do read – arrange for males to come and read)
Involving males	Male role models especially for those where there is no male at home
Inform parents of phonic screening	- but not stress children
Bring an adult to school	
All parents involved	Grandparents tea party
Meeting with child minders	Homework help
Crèche	More parents able to attend (pushchairs)
Re-establish PTA	To get more parents involved to restart

Appendix 13. Any further comments Away Day 16 January 2017

It is encouraging, in a strange way, that other schools also experience difficulty in engaging “the parents you want”

Attended two really thought provoking study days

Thanks for the support to make changes to what we are doing re. raising understanding of engaging parents

Thank you. This programme has made us think in an alternative direction

It was such a pity our (?) year head and EYFS Teacher were unable to get here it is so useful to share experiences

Encouraging fathers not really relevant for our school due to high level of absent fathers – thank you! Nice lunch!

Looking forward to continuing with our DL projects at school

Thank you for facilitating this project – we’ve come a long way and still have a list of ideas to follow through!

Thank you for enabling our school to take part in this project. It was a key feature in enabling our school to achieve the Achievement for All quality mark . Parental engagement was key to achieving this award.

The temp in the room was uncomfortable – either really cold or really hot.

Thanks for an initiative that has actually had a significant impact on school practice

Always good to talk to colleagues and share ideas

Thank you For us this is the beginning of an exciting journey. This project has allowed us to really focus and see what we can do for/how to support our parents

Thank you for letting me be involved in this interesting pilot

Thank you

Thank you!

Thank you 😊

Appendix 14. List of Tips and Ideas from Schools in the Project

- Meals – schools invited parents to share meals with their children, breakfast (Bacon Butties and Books), lunch and evening meals. This introduced parents to the school buildings and in the case of breakfast and lunch, provided an easy opportunity for parents to stay on and be involved in their children’s learning.
- Family learning – schools used a variety of opportunities to involve parents in their children’s learning at school, including inviting parents into homework clubs (for some families, this provided the only opportunity children had to do homework in a suitable environment)
- Increased and targeted information for parents: schools utilised existing means of communication (using newsletters to close feedback loops, to thank parents, and to introduce concepts for engaging with children’s learning at home). In some schools, this content was produced by the students themselves.
- Greater availability of staff. Schools increased opportunities for parent/staff interaction through a number of means. Staff did not stand with colleagues while in the company of parents, thus becoming more approachable. A number of primary schools instituted or expanded programmes of home visits for pupils and families. Schools also increased the time available to parents for consultations (parents’ evenings/days). Some of the schools involved in the Achievement for All programme, which uses structured conversations for parents involved in the project, extended these conversations to other parents.
- Project members constantly remarked on the value of working with colleagues from other schools, and about the value of coming together to share good practice.

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