

# ASPIRE Toolkit

## Parental Engagement

**A S P I R E**

to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils

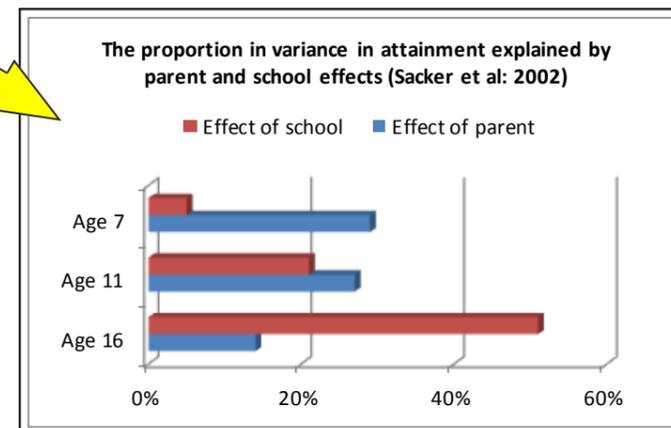
### Evidence base and rationale for PPG spending

The EEF evaluates the impact of parental involvement on the outcomes of pupils as:

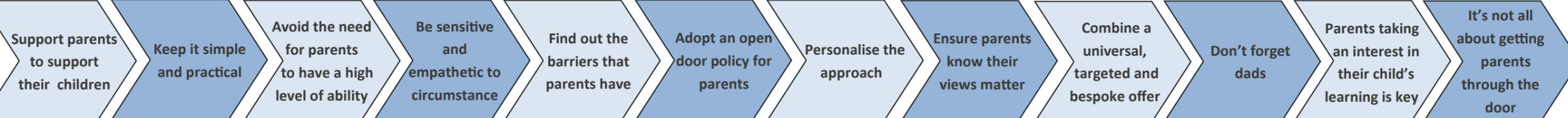
£ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ Moderate impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence

They outline that there is a well established association between parental involvement and academic success however evaluation of approaches to improve learning through parental involvement is relatively limited and what is available is predominantly focused on primary and the early years, with impact studies tending to focus on reading and maths.

However, other research from sources such as Desforges & Aboucher (2003), Goodall et al (2011), Goodman & Clegg (2010), Harris & Goodall (2007), OECD (2012) and Sylva et al (2004) suggests that: progress is better for children who's parents take an active interest; improvements gained from parental involvement tend to be permanent; parental commitment to a child's learning supersedes socio-economic status; high parental aspirations correlate to better performance at school; white parents tend to be less involved than those from BME communities; mothers tend to be more involved than fathers; schools can make a difference and raise levels of parental engagement.



### Key Messages



### What works?

A review of the available evidence on parental engagement undertaken in 2011 by the NFER and the DfE found that:

- a combined approach focusing on both academic outcomes and parenting skills is more effective than addressing either in isolation
- there is a statistical association between children's levels of achievement and parental promotion of reading and learning, parental interactions with their children and disciplinary practices
- support and training for parents, for example in managing behaviour, can increase their confidence and have a knock-on effect on the child's learning
- supporting the development of the home-learning environment can increase parental confidence in supporting children's literacy

**TOP IDEA**

At the start of the academic year invite disadvantaged parents & pupils to a meeting. Provide a small bursary (£50-100) for the purchase of a resource which will specifically benefit the learning of the child and help to overcome their barriers to learning. Ideas could include range from computer software or equipment to ingredients for cooking lessons.

**TOP IDEA**

Establish a game, toy or book lending library which specifically focuses on identified learning needs.

Hold after-school 'turn up and play' events where parents and their children can play board games, read etc.

### Ideas and examples of ongoing work on engaging parents from East Riding schools

- Half termly progress meetings for disadvantaged families
- Hold family/community events e.g BBQ/ Pizza night; parents work with children
- Parent Teacher Association work
- Allow parental/community access to school facilities e.g (internet, sport) to provide support/familiarity with school
- Offer adult education in schools
- 'Star of the half-term' invites parents/grandparents or friends to lunch
- Employ a home-school worker; home visits; support development of home learning environment
- Call home to parents who do not attend parents evening
- Stay and play
- Parental involvement in clubs e.g sports/arts, especially if they have a specialism
- Find non-threatening ways to get parents through the doors e.g craft days, coffee mornings; chat to the head
- Using *Achievement for All* structured conversations to communicate with parents
- Twice weekly meetings (Monday morning & Friday afternoon) to share news, concerns etc.
- Provide food at parents events or offer bacon sandwiches at breakfast club
- Parents' evening to inform parents of child's targets and progress
- Establish a parent council/forum with meetings both in the daytime & evening
- Parental involvement in school trips – cultural capital development for family funded through PP
- Reading volunteers
- Offer of help and guidance to complete forms and paperwork
- Parent workshops provide the skills needed to support their children
- Develop school links to community based activities: troubled families; Children's Centres; Regeneration/external funding for additional activities

**Some important questions to consider ...**

- Have we considered the available research about what works?
- What do we know about local needs and circumstances?
- How well do we know our parents from available data?
- Is our approach to parental engagement sustainable?
- What are the barriers preventing parents from engaging?
- Do we need to provide CPD to staff on engaging parents?
- How committed are our staff and SLT to our strategy?
- How do we demonstrate we value parental opinion?
- How effective is our communication with parents?
- Do we provide advice/support to promote positive parenting?
- How effective are our multi-agency partnerships?
- Is our school a welcoming environment for parents?
- Do we prioritise parental engagement in their child's learning?

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## Parental Engagement

Steps  
to  
Success

**Oxford School Improvement:** A summary of *Parental Engagement: How to make a real difference*, Oxford School Improvement



### TOP IDEA



A scheme in Staffordshire developed a Saturday morning 'Fantasy Football' club. Parents and children worked on developing football skills with professional coaches and then took part in creative learning opportunities such as kit design, team posters and logo design making use of the ICT suite and school art rooms. They also developed literacy skills through researching players and writing about them.

### Acknowledgments/Further Reading:

- [Teacher Guide: Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children](#), Helen Aston & Hilary Grayson, NFER
- [The Pupil Premium: Making it work in your school](#), Oxford School Improvement
- [Parental Engagement: How to make a real difference](#), Oxford School Improvement
- [Parental Involvement](#), EEF Teaching & Learning Toolkit
- [Closing the achievement gap: the critical importance of parental engagement](#), Di Hatchett (blog)
- [Pupil Premium Challenges: Supporting the most vulnerable children](#), Helen Frostrick
- [An Updated Practical Guide to the Pupil Premium](#), Marc Rowland, John Catt

Welcoming  
Environment

**Aim:** *Projecting the right messages to parents through the school environment and the behaviour of adults.* Actions could include home/school visits, seeking feedback, focus groups, surveys, CPD. **Possible approaches:** accommodating reception area with comfortable chairs, local radio playing, magazines and toys, café; family & community display areas (written in community languages if applicable); get families/community using school facilities at weekends/evenings; opportunities for informal chats with teachers & SLT; dedicated space for parents within school (use for adult education etc) - invite parental views for use/décor; two-way communication to establish a partnership in pupil learning; offer meetings at non-typical times of the day/key transition phases; direct parents to websites that will help support learning; hold CPD activities with staff to embed the ethos that parents are partners in learning and how this partnership can be developed; promote a 'doing with' rather than a 'doing to' culture.

Effective  
Communication

**Aim:** *Ensuring communication focuses on the child's learning.* Actions could include surveys on learning needs, communication review, balance between good/bad news, CPD. **Possible approaches:** curriculum workshops/open afternoons; opportunities for parent/child collaboration in school; weekly newsletters/social media posts/text messages about how to support learning at home; learning displays; using e-Portfolios of children's work which parents can access and upload to; developing social media pages focusing on the curriculum and supporting learning; creating pupil videos about their learning; setting interactive homework activities; fun 'take away' activities linked to learning which can be done at home.

Hard to reach  
parents

**Aim:** *Improving access to parents who may be wary of school due to personal experience or low literacy level and EAL parents.* Actions could include data analysis of data on parents to identify individuals/groups, audit the skills of parents and look for ways to hook them into school life, review attendance at parental activities. **Possible approaches:** engage parents in non-threatening activities to start with to build up confidence; move onto the academic over time; use prize draws, the offer of food, the offer of freebies to entice parents; look for community ambassadors who could offer outreach work with parents; use new technologies rather than face to face meetings; value contribution of difference or interests e.g cultural differences (food, clothing), unusual jobs.

Getting dads  
involved

**Aim:** *Building on paternal influences on a child's success at school, particularly for boys.* Actions could include reviewing work and activities undertaken with dads and developing an engagement strategy/policy, focusing on fathers reading intensively with their children, monitor attendance at school events—do we have 'hard to reach dads'. **Possible approaches:** link school events to traditional male interests e.g. sport; ensure that any dad-orientated activities focus on educational outcomes and are designed to be fun but also to support learning; clearly state the purpose and bigger picture of the activity; use activities which demand challenge and competition; get dads involved in planning activities for them and their children, maybe meeting at a local pub to do so; ask fathers to give talks to the class on their jobs, specific interests etc.—build into further engagement activities e.g. sports clubs, car maintenance etc.

Groups &  
workshops

**Aim:** *Developing an effective range of courses and workshops to support parents in supporting their children.* Actions could include reviewing the effectiveness, impact and appropriateness of any courses currently on offer, partnering with external agencies, providers or other local schools, focusing on literacy initiatives. **Possible approaches:** research courses and workshops which are highly effective; use your PP grant to buy in courses which have a proven track record; develop your own courses for parents which are tailored to your curriculum and pedagogy; focus on maths, literacy and social/emotional development; provide a universal offer to demonstrate that offering support is 'normal' and does not 'single out' but target identified parents with personalised invites; use community ambassadors to encourage parents to sign up and get involved.

Parents'  
evenings

**Aim:** *Ensuring that calendared events are effective and have impact.* Actions could include developing information systems to record parental engagement, interactions, conversations and attendance, analysing held data to target specific groups, link pupil progress to parental engagement and monitor impact, CPD for staff on best-practice during parents evenings and parental conversations. **Possible approaches:** structure conversations which focus on the importance of partnerships and make parents feel like equal partners; consider the seating arrangements for parents evenings/meetings—are they conducive to effective discussions and the ethos of partnership?; listen to the parents point of view and ask for their input on how they feel their child could be best supported; find out what parents see as the key barriers to learning of their children; involve parents in the target setting process—empower them and give them an element of accountability and responsibility for the progress of their child.

Intervention

**Aim:** *Developing effective parental communication of their child's involvement in an intervention programme.* Actions could include reviewing interventions currently used and considering whether involving parents in them could be possible. **Possible approaches:** be upfront with parents about the PP and how it will be spent—involved parents in spending decisions; ensuring there are 'no surprises' for parents in terms of progress through high quality communication; discuss the intervention provision map with parents when intervention is needed, and make a joint decision on the best approach to take; set up contracts laying out school input v parental input for interventions; if buying-in interventions consider ones which have parental involvement build into their design, but that don't put too much pressure on parents; develop your own interventions which parents could get involved in.

Leadership &  
Management

**Aim:** *Ensuring the systems are in place to support effective parental engagement.* Actions could include creating a shared vision for parental engagement, monitoring and evaluating the quality of parental engagement and how well embedded the ethos of partnership is, assessing the extent to which parental engagement is focused on impact and outcomes. **Possible approaches:** lead whole-team meetings to develop a shared agreement on the schools vision for parental engagement; survey parents on how they would like to be involved and how they would feel welcomed; model the required attitudes and values to all staff members; embed the belief within all staff members that parents are the experts on their own children; model correct behaviours and language—is there a CPD need here?; prioritise parental engagement on the school development plan; designate a member of SLT as parental champion; build parental engagement into job descriptions and recruitment campaigns.