



How to
build effective
home-school
partnerships.

in partnership with

Please note: underlined words denote a link to our research and resources.

When parents are involved in their children's education, children do better on a range of measures¹:

- Their behaviour is better²
- They have greater self-esteem³
- Their attendance is higher⁴
- The risk of exclusion is lower⁵
- They are more keen to learn⁶
- They achieve better results⁷
- The achievement gap between children and young people from different socio-economic backgrounds is reduced⁸.



The effect of parental engagement over a student's school career is equivalent to adding two or three years to that student's education.⁹

John Hattie

“ In the best cases seen, joint working between the home and the school led to much better outcomes for pupils; in particular, this helped pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with low attendance or who were potentially vulnerable in other ways¹⁰. ”

Ofsted

Ofsted evaluates schools on parent engagement under leadership and management and has found the most effective schools work in partnership with parents.

The benefits of parental engagement are clear. We know schools want to engage parents, and parents want to be engaged. So, what can parents and schools do to improve the way they work together?

PTA UK, NAHT and ASCL have collaborated on this guidance to inspire you to overcome these barriers and harness the power of parents to support learning.

The majority of parents tell us they want to be involved, yet many schools struggle to engage their parents. A PTA UK survey in 2016 found that

84%

of parents wanted to be consulted about their child's education.

Barriers to developing an effective home-school partnership

What Parents Say

Lack of time (work, childcare)

Haven't been asked

Low self-esteem, find the idea of getting involved intimidating

Negative experience of school

Low aspirations

Health issues

Lack of guidance on how to support their child

Not sure what skills and knowledge they can contribute

[Read full Parent survey results here.](#)

What Teachers Say

Lack of time for both teachers and parents

Difficult getting parents interested/involved

Belief among parents that educating their children is the school's job

Parents unable to support their child's learning because of limited education

Families disengaged with education

Reluctance of parents to come into school

Lack of training in parent engagement

Challenging parent behaviour

[Read full teacher survey results here.](#)

School leaders and parents need to understand both the drivers and barriers for their own school and explore how best to address them. **Engaging both parents and teachers in this process is crucial.** A parent body such as a parent council, parent forum or PTA can help schools to bridge the gulf that often exists. Teachers need to understand that working with parents will help them do their job more effectively, avoid time-consuming conflict and help them achieve better outcomes for their students.

You can build positive parental participation by:

1. Taking a whole school approach including strong leadership/commitment of the Head and governing body
2. Effective and regular two-way communication
3. Support for home-school learning
4. Parental participation in school life.

“Parent engagement offers the best lever to narrow the achievement gap.”¹¹

*P25 “Narrowing the achievement gap”
Dr J Goodall 2017.*



How to build an effective home-school partnership

- 1 **A whole school strategic approach to parental engagement is prioritised in the whole school development plan where parents are considered partners.**

When this is done well:

- There is an expectation that every member of the team plays their part. From the receptionist and administrative staff, pastoral teams and teachers to senior leaders and governors, all make it a priority to reach out to parents, to involve them in their child's learning and in the life of the school.
- Training and support is provided for all members of staff in how to engage parents effectively in their children's learning, and how to overcome the barriers outlined above.
- Where possible, parents are involved in decision-making on issues which affect them, and school policies reflect the views of parents. When making decisions at every level, school staff and leaders consider the impact on parents.

Suggestions for schools:

- Have a member of senior management and a governor responsible for parent engagement
- Build parent engagement into school improvement plan
- Develop a home-school agreement that makes it clear what you expect of parents, and what you will do to support them
- Measure and celebrate your success making sure parents and staff know the impact that working together has had on things such as learning, attendance and behaviour
- Provide parent engagement training for staff.
- Encourage staff to visit other schools with strong parental engagement strategies
- Consider ways to raise or challenge parents' aspirations for their children, such as bringing in inspirational speakers or members of the community doing interesting jobs, and inviting both children and parents to hear them speak

Suggestions for parents:

- Encourage teachers to develop a home-school agreement that includes parent engagement
- Take advantage of communication opportunities that the school provides to give your view
- Join/set up a parent council or parent forum to support the school in developing policies and giving parent views



2 Effective and regular two-way communication between home and school is prioritised and there is an emphasis on building trust.

When this is done well:

- Parents are clear about how they can best help their child and where to go if they need help or support. They know how to contact their child's teacher(s) and can expect a timely response.
- The school provides clear information and guidance (for example through the use of video clips, apps and social media) and regular opportunities for dialogue to ensure that parents and teachers work together in support of the child.

Suggestions for schools:

- Use different ways to communicate with parents depending on their communication preferences (newsletter, noticeboards, social media, face to face meetings)
- Consider how to ensure parents for whom English isn't their first language can access your communications
- Ensure school policies are easy for parents to access
- Make your school welcoming so parents know they can approach you (e.g. parent notice board zone)
- Make sure there are straightforward ways for parents to provide feedback
- Always feed back to parents when you have taken their ideas on board or from surveys you've asked them to fill in

Suggestions for parents:

- Send the school a positive message when something is going well (teachers and school leaders need to know this just as much as what can be improved)
- If you have any concerns, speak to the school – you both have the same goals for your child! Keep communication respectful whatever forum is used (face to face, email, social media)
- Familiarise yourself with the school's policies (they should be on their website), so you know what to expect, and when it might be appropriate to question things

3 Support for home-school learning where parents are given information about what their children are learning and ideas about how they can support them at home.

When this is done well:

- Opportunities to develop parenting skills are offered so that parents support social, emotional and behavioural well-being and can encourage their children to become active citizens.
- Where parents have poor basic skills, schools signpost them to support so that they are able to better help their child.
- Teachers suggest resources, activities and local visits that families can do together to support learning.
- Parents have access to the curriculum online and information about the content and timing of national tests.
- Opportunities are provided for parents to communicate with teachers about how their child is doing and what they need to do to progress.

Suggestions for schools:

- Hold sessions for parents to explain how the school teaches key aspects of the curriculum (e.g. phonics, maths), and how they can support this work at home
- Share resources such as learning games and activities that parents can share with children at home, or guidance on emotional or vocational support
- Share information with parents to update them on that year's learning expectations and goals, exams and other important dates through information evenings and text messages
- Give parents the heads up on what you are teaching from month to month

Suggestions for parents:

- Share a story with your child (if they are older, let them read to you or share discussions on books)
- Create an environment where they can concentrate on learning
- Go visit the library with your child and get them a library card – there are resources for all ages
- Remember, having a positive view about your child's school and education goes a long way and really affects how well your child does

- 4 Parental participation in school life strengthens the school and builds the home-school partnership. There are a range of opportunities for participation recognising that parents will want to contribute in different ways.**

When this is done well:

- Parents are invited to join the parent group (such as parent council or PTA) and contribute to parent forums or focus groups.
- A culture of parent volunteering is developed – with training provided where needed.
- It is acknowledged that schools cannot educate children on their own and will benefit by building a genuine partnership with their parents and local communities.

Success stories exemplifying many of these suggestions can be found on the PTA UK website: pta.org.uk

Suggestions for schools:

- Support the set-up of your school's parent council and ensure there is a clear pathway of accountability to the leadership team
- Where possible, include your parents in important school decisions
- Support your PTA and help it to modernise and appeal to more parents
- Consider ways in which you can open up your school to community events, to help more parents feel comfortable in the school environment
- Undertake an audit of your parent community's knowledge, skills and experience, and invite individual parents to contribute to the school in particular ways

Suggestions for parents:

- Volunteer/offer to help (don't wait to be asked)
- Start or join a parent group (your PTA is usually looking for new members)
- Be welcoming and encouraging to other parents – especially those who might not feel they can engage – just ask!

About the Authors

PTA UK supports schools to work with parents and parents to work with schools. Our vision is of an education system where schools and local communities work together to get the best for all children. Our aim is to help all schools develop a 21st century home-school partnership fit for a 21st century school in a 21st century society. Our offer is training, guidance and support to make such partnerships a reality.

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is a professional body and trade union, representing over 18,000 school leaders across the UK, including heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads and business managers. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people in primary and secondary schools and FE colleges. ASCL works to shape national education policy, provide advice and support to

members and deliver first class professional development. We speak on behalf of members and act on behalf of children and young people.

NAHT is now in its 120th year and represents more than 29,000 school leaders in early years, primary, secondary and special schools, making us the largest association for school leaders in the UK. We represent, advise and train school leaders in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We use our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere. NAHT Edge supports, develops and represents middle leaders in schools.

Other Research:

For details on further research underpinning this guidance please go to www.pta.org.uk.

¹F. Carnie (2011) The Parent Participation Handbook: a practical guide to maximising parental involvement in your school Optimus Education. ²Feinstein & Symons 1999, Attainment in Secondary School, Oxford Economic Papers 51. ³Deforges & Abouchar (2003) The Impact of parental involvement parental Support & Family Education on Pupil Achievements & Adjustments DfES Research Report 2003. ⁴Melhuish, E., Sylva, C., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Taggart, B. (2001). Social, behavioural and cognitive development at 3-4 years in relation to family background. The effective provision of pre-school education, EPPE project. DfEE: London: The Institute of Education. ⁵Deforges & Abouchar 2003. ⁶Feinstein & Symons 1999. ⁷Feinstein & Symons 1999 and Deforges & Abouchar 2003. ⁸DWP 2002. ⁹J. Hattie (2008) Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Routledge. ¹⁰Ofsted 2011 Schools and parents April 2011, No. 100044. ¹¹Alma Harris, Janet Goodall, (2007): Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement Do Parents Know They Matter? DCSF Research Report RW004