Hackney

Working for every child

PARENT AND CARER ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

For Schools

FOREWORD

When schools, parents and carers work together in equal partnership, we are better able to hear, understand and meet the goals and aspirations of our children and young people. In Hackney we are invested and committed to working in partnership and we are very supportive of the innovative approaches schools have developed. This toolkit, alongside a programme of events, training and a pool of useful resources, has been developed to support schools as they continue to reflect, refine and develop best practice.

Caroline Woodley
Mayor of Hackney

Parents and Carers are the experts on their children and are best placed to tell us how to support them. Our incredible schools have a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills and consistently deliver outstanding results for our pupils. When parents and carers and schools come together and work in effective partnerships we can really unlock the potential for all of our pupils. This toolkit has been designed for head teachers and leaders to support them in developing their practice, provision and approach to effective engagement with all families.

Anntoinette Bramble
Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care

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CONTEXT

Parent/ carer engagement is the single most changeable factor in a child's achievement. By refining and improving parent and carer engagement, schools can positively improve; attainment; progress; attendance; behaviour; wellbeing; aspirations; and ultimately a child's achievement.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been developed for head teachers and senior leaders to use to review and improve parent and carer engagement.

The system leader for parent carer engagement can support you through any parts of this process

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You should begin by gathering data and completing the audit tool. Ensure you involve all stakeholders at this stage. You might find it useful to share the audit across SLT and work on it together then come together to draw out key headlines. You might like to spread this work over half a term.

After you have completed and reflected on the audit, agree on priorities to work on. These should ideally feed into whole school priorities. They might span longer than a year and should be regularly reviewed and adapted. Consider the implementation of the plan and share the approach with your Governing Body/ Board and agree on regular updates against progress.

Use the tools, tips and useful links to support the implementation. The system leader for parent and carer engagement will also be running webinars, CPD sessions and networking events to support effective parent and carer engagement. There will be opportunities to share challenges, solutions and best practice too. Finally there is a case study to capture best practice, please complete this and send too

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Suggested plan of activity

Half term 1	Auditing
Half term 2	Priorities, action plan, sharing with stakeholders and planning implementation
Half term 3	Launch new approaches, implementation of action plan including CPD
Half term 4 and 5	Review and implement action plan, including CPD
Half term 6	Review and implement action plan, plan for sustainability and write case study
Long term	Revisit audit, share and refine practice

PARENT AND CARER ENGAGEMENT AUDIT TOOL

The RAG (red, amber, green) rating is designed to stimulate discussion. You can review practice in relation to all pupils, but you should also ensure pupils who are vulnerable to underachievement are given a tight focus. You might find it helpful to note under the RAG status the provision/ impact you have in that area that helped you arrive at that judgement.

Collate the results, and settle on 2 or 3 areas on which, as a school, team or department, you will commit to working. Record your decisions and use them to update the school's action plan, department-specific plan, WAMHS or SDP. Review every half term to assess impact and progress.

Reflective questions and suggestions are in italics throughout the audit.

As part of the audit

- Collect and review Pupil voice
- Collect and review Parent and Carer voice
- Collect and review staff voice
- Evaluate and reflect on data and the correlation between parent and carer engagement (attainment, progress, attendance, behaviour, etc.)
- Look at the school from parent/ carer eyes (the playground, the outer building, reception, the street)
- Review your communications to parents/ carers (letters, noticeboards, email/texts, etc.)
- Review your calendar of parent/ carer events, workshops, etc. and attendance/ impact of these
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PARENT AND CARER ENGAGEMENT TOOL AUDIT

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Individual Parent and Carer communications:				
Staff use a range of communications, including face to face, telephone, email, etc. regularly to achieve effective and personal communications with Parents and Carers. *Do staff ensure regular positive interactions with all parents/ carers? Are staff confident in achieving positive interactions? Are parents and carers notified in a caring and timely manner of any serious issues?*				
All Staff use the Structured Conversations framework to achieve effective dialogue with Parents and Carers *Have staff had training on structured conversations?*				
All Staff demonstrate active listening skills *Have all staff had training on active listening and do they implement these skills successfully?*				
Parents and Carers can easily access staff by phone and email. *Do all parents and carers have ways to access different members of staff? Do they know who to contact?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
The school takes care to ensure that Parents and Carers understand the progress their child is making, different assessment terms, and regularly discuss actions that the school and Parents and Carers will take to support progress. *How effective are parent meetings (or equivalent)? How effectively do reports communicate progress? What does parent/ carer voice say about this area?*				
Home-School diaries or planners are used consistently and effectively as a communication with Parents and Carers, as well as for pupils' own benefit. *How effective are these for communicating with all parents/ carers? What does pupil, staff and parent/ carer voice say about these?*				
Parents and Carers are kept informed about the curriculum being covered each half of term, homework set, and extra-curricular opportunities. Parents and Carers have access to learning resources for pupils, and the school works with them to increase their awareness and the potential of materials. *How are parents and carers consulted about the curriculum? How well do all pupils access extracurricular opportunities? How well are parents/ carers supported/signposted to learning materials?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Collective communications				
The school newsletter and web communications are accessible to all Parents and Carers (check distribution method/language level/content/font size/translation) *How do you ensure all parents and carers can access? How do you ensure it is inclusive and relevant/ helpful?*				
Common Q&As or a 'handbook' for Parents and Carers are provided in accessible formats, and alternative arrangements are made for Parents and Carers with low literacy levels and whose first language is not English *How do you reach all parents/ carers? E.g. utilise staff members, parent champions,etc. Have you developed innovative ways of sharing this information?*				
Parents and Carers have access to a specific room/space, and/or web space / forum / notice board where they can find information and support, and this is kept up to date by a named member of staff *Is there a welcoming, safe space for parents and carers to see updates and how do you keep these relevant? Are they used to celebrate everyone in the community?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Activities, events and initiatives to increase parental engagement and support their involvement in their children's learning are a regular part of the school's calendar. *Have parents/ carers been involved in developing the events, themes, approaches, etc. Do the events celebrate everyone in the community? Are they used to target parents/ carers who do not readily engage in more formal events?*				
Events and activities for Parents and Carers are well conceived, well planned and evaluated *How is feedback from events gathered, evaluated and used to inform future planning?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Listening and responding				
The school uses regular and systematic processes for listening to Parents and Carers and gaining their views on issues relating to learning, including the curriculum. The school also uses Parent View to act on Parents' and Carers' perceptions *What different ways do you have for listening to parents/ carers on aspects of school life? How do you ensure all parents and carers are part of this? How do you let parents/ carers know you've listened and made changes?*				
Complaints, comments and suggestions are responded to positively, and viewed as a means of improving our service to and relationship with Parents and Carers *How do all staff view feedback from parents and carers? How does the school value feedback?*				
'Parent Observers' or "forums" are used to feedback on events/systems/ communications to offer a Parent or Carer perspective on improving what we do *How do parents and carers act as a critical friend? Are reps, champions, forums, observers able to give helpful feedback?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
New Parents' and Carers' induction and welcome				
Parents' and Carers' induction is part of induction for new pupils, and specific arrangements are made to Parents or Carers of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities *How effective is induction for parents/ carers? How do you tailor it for individual needs? How are expectations shared from the start? E.g. home/ school agreement, tour, parent champions, etc.*				
All new Parents and Carers meet the Head teacher or senior member of staff for a one to one at an early stage *Do all parents/ carers have this opportunity?*				
Addressing barriers to engagement				
The school has checks to ensure that particular parents/groups are not excluded from Parents and Carers activities and communications *How do teachers and leaders take responsibility for this to ensure all parents/ carers are included? What systems are in place?*				
Events and activities are specifically planned for those Parents and Carers who do not readily engage *How do staff consider the barriers and how to remove them through targeted events?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Home visiting is used where this is necessary to secure engagement *How regularly and effectively does the school use home visiting as a way to build relationships, repair relationships and support different circumstances?*				
Family learning is recognised as a key means of supporting Parents and Carers and reinforcing positive attitudes to learning – and for breaking a cycle of under-achievement in families. *How are family learning events planned for and how effective are they?*				
Creative ways of engaging with hard-to-reach Parents and Carers are deployed, using new technologies and/or web services. *How do staff develop and trial new ways of engaging parents/ carers? Is dedicated time given to CPD on this?*				
There are systems for tracking the engagement of parents and carers and this information is used to inform and develop practice. *Are there any groups disproportionately represented? Is there a senior leader with designated responsibility for this?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Our culture, attitudes and approach				
Parents and Carers always get a warm and friendly reception whenever they telephone or visit the school. *How are all staff trained in welcoming parents/ carers? To what extent do all staff understand the importance of positive interactions?*				
We consciously use explicit and implicit ways to demonstrate to Parents and Carers that we value and respect them. We ensure that this includes the diversity of parents. *How is this demonstrated through events, messaging, attitudes, beliefs, etc?*				
We act on the principle that all Parents and Carers want the best for their children, regardless of their perceived history or circumstances, and it's our job to help them. We don't regard any parents as 'unreachable'. *To what extent do all staff believe this? How does the school model a relentless approach? What success stories have you had?*				
We take steps to understand the barriers for Parents and Carers, and address their different needs, cultures and circumstances. *How does the school ensure it has an accurate understanding of the barriers for all parents/ carers? What steps has the school taken to address these and how successful have they been?*				

In our school...	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
We regard Parents and Carers as equal partners in their children's education *To what extent do all stakeholders believe and feel this?*				
We take steps to develop staff skills and to work well with all Parents and Carers *How is CPD planned as part of induction and throughout the year? How do you target support?*				
We have parent governors that represent our school community and play a pivotal role in school development. **Parents/ carers know who the school governors are.** *How do you ensure all parents/ carers have the opportunity to become a parent governor? How do you develop relationships with governors and parents/ carers? How do you inform governors of parent/ carer engagement work and progress?*				
Our parents and carers have positive interactions with one another, understanding, supporting and celebrating everyone's uniqueness. *How have you built the school community? How do you ensure parents have positive relationships with each other and all parents and carers are integrated?*				

In our school…	Developing (limited or no practice)	Embedding (practice evident and some impact)	Sustaining (consistent practice with demonstrable impact)	Possible actions
Supporting and signposting our parents and carers				
Our parents and carers know who to go to for support for different issues. Staff have names, roles and photos clearly displayed. Staff are approachable and know how to signpost parents and carers to appropriate support. *Do parents/ carers readily receive and engage with support? Do parents/ carers feel they can approach staff for support? How well does the school work with other services and signpost support?*				
The website/ newsletter/ comms has links to organisations for further support *How connected is the school with the local community? How does the school signpost local support, events, etc?*				

Data

Below is a suggestion of the data you might find useful to collect at the start of the audit and monitor as you implement your action plan. It is not an exhaustive list so do adapt to suit your needs. Do consider any trends in data and any groups that might need further work.

	Benchmark Data Year X	Data tracking Term 1	Data tracking Term 2	Data tracking Term 3	Data tracking	Data tracking
% or no parents / carers attending parents' evening						
No. of praise texts/ emails sent home						
No. of parents attending educational events organised by the school						
No of parents attending non educational events organised by the school						
No of parents unable to engage						
No. of home visits						
Parent/ carer survey results						
Percentage of parents who are requested to engage with other services/ support and do so.						
Attendance						
Exclusions and suspensions						
Attainment and progress						
Other						

STAKEHOLDER VOICE

Below are suggestions of topics you might like to cover when gathering stakeholder voice. Do tailor to your needs and use a range of ways to ensure all voices are captured, e.g. focus groups, coffee mornings, surveys, face to face events, etc. and make them accessible for all.

Parent/ carer voice

- How useful was your induction to the school?
- How well do you understand the progress your child is making?
- How well do you feel you can support your child's education?
- How helpful are our school events in supporting you to support your child?
- How much do you feel part of the school community?
- How confident/ easy do you find talking to our staff?
- How welcome do you feel in the school?
- How well does the school communicate with you?

Pupil voice

- How important is it that your parents/ carers support you in your education?
- How well do your parents/ carers support your education?
- How helpful do you find parents evenings/ meetings?
- How well do your parents/carers support your next steps?

Staff voice

- How confident do you feel in meeting and working with parents/ carers?
- How important is parent/ carer engagement?
- How helpful has CPD for working with parents/ carers been?
- How challenging is it to engage with all parents/ carers?

IMPLEMENTATION

Below is a suggested proforma for developing an action plan in response to your audit. Please do use existing school action plans/ SDPs as appropriate. You may wish to refer to EEF guidance on implementation

educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/ education-evidence/guidance-reports/ implementation
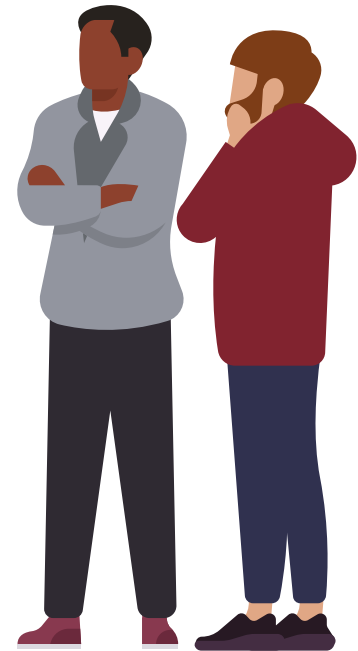
Overarching priorities:

Target	Actions	Responsible/ resourcing	Date	Success criteria	Evaluation/ impact

BARRIERS TO PARENT AND CARER ENGAGEMENT

Experience of Education

- Seeing the school as an unfair system that needs to be 'fought', and supporting their child to fight the system
- Parent and Carer experience of school was: "sit down, do this, don't speak" – not a great deal of interaction
- Looking up to teachers, and not feeling that it is appropriate to be equal partners
- Intergenerational underachievement at school
- Feeling that education failed them and gets one nowhere
- Racism
- Prejudices

Skills

- Not understanding today's education system: curriculum, school structures, systems and procedures
- Not understanding the etiquette of meetings: agenda, minutes, formalities
- Not having English as a first language or understanding the English education system
- Parents and Carers feeling that they do not have the right 'language' to use in meetings:
- Not understanding their child's school reports
- Not being able to 'keep up' with the work their child is doing in school

Practical Issues

- Work responsibilities limiting time to spend with children
- Difficulty arranging care for younger children
- Transport difficulties getting to school
- Lack of time due to other responsibilities
- School appointments being offered between 9am and 5pm
- Lack of informal contact at school – not dropping the child off to the secondary school like they did at primary school
- Language issues – lack of a friend who can translate
- Cultural issues which may make meeting difficult

Perceived Teacher Attitudes

- A power imbalance: Parents and Carers feeling that teachers look down on them because they are uneducated
- Feeling intimidated by teachers – they have degrees and are formally dressed
- Teachers using the same language/ behaviour when meeting 1:1 with Parents and Carers as they do with classes and pupils
- Perception the teachers are unlikely to like their child for whatever reason
- Teachers do not listen
- Teachers assume that a Parent and Carer is not interested if they are not regularly in touch with the school/ attend Parent and Carer evenings
- Teachers not able to understand the pressures which the family endures

QUADRANTS OF ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGED BUT NOT CURRENTLY SUPPORTING EFFECTIVELY

ENGAGED AND SUPPORTING EFFECTIVELY

PREVIOUSLY ENGAGED/ SUPPORTIVE BUT NOW DISENGAGED

NOT ENGAGED AND NOT CURRENTLY SUPPORTING EFFECTIVELY

HOME/SCHOOL AGREEMENT EXAMPLE

As the School…	As the Parents/Carers…	As the Pupils
Consistently deliver high quality lessons that engage, enthuse and challenge.	Ensure that our child attends school regularly.	Follow the school rules
Provide a broad and balanced curriculum which challenges your child to reach their potential and fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum.	Notify the school by letter or telephone in the event of absence.	Be honest.
Provide a happy and stimulating learning environment.	Keep us informed of where to contact you in case of emergency.	Be respectful.
Create an ethos where children are safe and secure at all times, and where all adults fully understand the role that they play in safeguarding our children.	Respect and trust the teaching staff and support their decisions.	Be tolerant.
Keep you informed about your child's progress and behaviour.	Support the school's policies.	Be resilient.
Foster high expectations for positive behaviour with consistent and clear boundaries for interaction with others.	Support our child by promoting opportunities for home learning.	Do my very best in my lessons and with my homework.

Signed

School: _____

Parent/ carer: _____

Child: _____

SCHOOLS GUIDANCE ON SETTING UP A PARENT/CARER FORUM AND LISTEN SPACES

Introduction:

This guidance will look at how schools can further enhance their work with parents and improve engagement between parents and school by setting up a forum. Setting up forums in schools is an effective way parents and carers can get involved in their child's education. Parents are a huge part in their child's educational journey and research continues to demonstrate that the more parents are engaged with their child's education, the better their outcomes. If parents have high aspirations for their child's school, this too can positively influence children's academic outcomes.

What is a Parent Forum?

A parent forum is an active group of parents, who work in partnership with the school to shape and develop the educational experience of their children. Forums which currently exist in some Hackney schools are specific to different groups of parents, thus representing marginalised voices and removing possible barriers that might exist amongst some parents. Parent forums are also effective in allowing parents to understand how their roles fit into the wider picture of school life. Therefore the forums should be co-designed with stake-holders within the school commuity - adopting the **Spectrum of Public Participation**.

How go we get one going?

Step 1: Communication with stakeholders:

- As a leadership group, identify the purpose and rationale of the forum; this might be based on having collected some views from parents as a whole or specific groups of parents that the school wishes to engage with more. The success of the forum

- Ensure that a named senior leader is able to drive the momentum of the parent forum to ensure it becomes embedded within the school ethos of the school community

- **Communication with the Board of Governors** - Headteacher to communicate intentions to governors to ensure they are on board - preferbly a governor with this responsibility could update the board.

Step 2: Communication with parents:

- Ensure the target group of parents are aware that the school will be starting a parents' forum - this should be communicated repeatedly, via students, texts, newsletters, school websites, in planners, at the school gate.
Staff should anticipate queries about the target group - a response about engaging a variety of parents to support learning, could mitigate further comments.

- **Take a pulse survey (Google Form/ Surveymonkey) -** Conduct a short pulse survey - no more than three to six questions - to establish possible barriers that parents face in engaging with the school and themes for the forum. **This is optional but will give you a good idea about the barriers that your parents face. Primary schools could use coffee mornings to capture ideas quickly.**
- Use a quick Google Form or Surveymonkey form to ask brief questions to establish the suitability of meetings; face-to-face or online and time of day/ evening/frequency.
- Use data to look at under-performing students, PPI , Black Caribbean boys, White Working-class and other identified groups on the school's action plan and ask yourself, what are the levels of engagement with their parents
- Personally target some parents, especially those not involved in school life, for various reasons - a trusted voice from the school is required to reach out.

Step 3: Communication with staff:

- **Take a pulse -** Conduct a short pulse survey to gauge the ideas of staff on themes and thoughts on what they hope to see come out of these forums to ensure that you adopt a whole school culture around engaging parents.
- Ensure there is a named person, with responsibility for parental engagement, who uses data to target parents.
- Named person should consult with HoYs and other members of the pastoral team to confirm which parents' voices they would like to hear from - possibly parents whose children have experienced FTEs, not fully engaged, EAL, SEND etc.

Step 4: Recruiting parents:

- Ensure that the targeted group of parents are represented on the forum
- Personally invite some parents, especially those not involved in school life, for various reasons - a trusted voice from the school is required to reach out.
- A personal invation and follow-up phone calls are made to invited parents.

Step 5: Logistics:

- Based on feedback from staff and parents' pulse surveys, decide on a time, location, mode (Face-to-face/online/ hybrid) and space, if in school.
- Communicate to parents and staff, informing them of the above logistics.
- Communicate the date and time; decide who will lead the meetings/who will be present in all meetings and in what capacity.

Step 6: Hold first meeting:

- Think about how the group will gel/ introductions in the first meeting/ice breaker activity.
- **Making co-design meaningful:** Establish clarity of forum - all must be clear about what the forum aims and hopes to achieve; this is important as it ensures everyone is involved and understands its purpose, creating a 'sense of belonging' - links to the Equalities and anti-racism agenda for HEd.
- Decide on a name; this may reflect the make-up of the group.
- Re-establish barriers and concerns that the parents and the school have.
- When members meet/how decisions will be taken - the *The GROW model is useful: *Goals, Reality, Options, Will.*

- This may include feeling involved, informed, establishing feeling a safe and non-judgemental space/principles of honesty
- Consider the following aspects when deciding on content - this area is key as listening to parents will allow you capture their voices and address areas of improvement together:

  – Which external speakers to invite

  – Use feedback from pulse surveys, dependent on the make-up of the group;

  – How will the wider school community be involved?

  – How will the community beyond the school be involved

  – How can the System Leader for Parental Engagement at Hackney Education support the forum?

  – How can community organisations facilitate the forums?

  – Agendas for forthcoming meetings

  – How the forum will shape and drive improvement

  – Ensuring that conversations are strategic - extend invite to a member of the school's

    - governing board.
    - Curriculum/policies
    - Concerns raised by parents could form case studies to demonstrate how the forum has worked through issues.

Evaluate: Determine efficacy of the forum:

- Is the forum capturing the parents' voices of the underperforming groups in your school?
- Are there any noticeable changes in the identified students' attituteds and parents, who are now engaging?
- **Ensure parents know you have listened** - let parents know that they have been heard and what will happen as a consequence

Evaluating the impact of the forum:

- **Taking feedback from the parents of the targeted group will give you a sense of the impact**
- **A positive parental engagement with the targeted group -** determined by the tracking and monitoring of this group of parents
- **Use of data that may have been initially collected and used to determine which parents to target.**

TOP TIPS AND LINKS TO USEFUL RESOURCES

Events

Plan a calendar of events in advance and share with parents and carers in a range of ways, e.g. newsletters, website, text msg reminders, emails, noticeboards, etc. Get regular feedback about these events, use parents and carers to help plan and implement them and have a review cycle.

Pupils have pester power!

Make sure your pupils know about the events happening, talk about them in assemblies, display around school, etc. and ask them to share them with their parents/ carers.

Plan events at a range of times so all parents and carers can access, including virtual options.

Monitor attendance for different days/ times so you can plan events for well attended times. Utilise your best attended events… huge turnout at sports day? Add in a healthy eating workshop! 100 % attendance at parents evenings? Have stalls in the hall to signpost resources. Assemblies have standing room only? Pop a workshop on at the end!

Pupils are a great way to run workshops and events!

Getting your pupils to run events and workshops is a great way to consolidate their learning and build their confidence. It is also a great way of getting your parents and carers to attend events as they will want to see their children but also it can be less intimidating when children are running them. Getting the children to write invites to these events is an excellent way to promote them!

School example:

A school was having very poor attendance to workshops on instructional writing. They reflected and changed the event to cook with your kids! Pupils wrote invitations to their parents and carers and during the workshop the children cooked a meal alongside their parents/ carers with the teacher supporting the features of instructional writing.

After they all ate together, to build relationships, engagement and to model good speaking and listening. Parents and carers were given another batch of ingredients and the recipe to try again at home.

Develop events with the whole community in mind, e.g. events that celebrate different cultures, different family set ups, different languages, genders, etc.

Babies welcome!

A common barrier for attending events is childcare. Parents and carers can feel nervous about bringing children to events in case they are loud, run around or some might not feel comfortable breastfeeding in school. Consider a space that parents and carers can use to breastfeed and communicate this well. Manage expectations for events, e.g there is a space at the back if your child needs to move around (provide a box of toys and assign a member of staff if possible). For meetings where you need a parent/ carer to be distraction free, ask them if they have a relative that can support. Some schools are able to offer a creche for some sessions.

Freebies!

Develop packs/ goody bags for parents/ carers and pupils to take away from workshops and/ or parents evenings. This could be anything from some whiteboard pens and whiteboard (make them cheap by laminating paper), times table resources, a book, water bottle, planners, top tips, website/ signposting, key words/ vocab, dice games, etc.

Bring the learning to them!

Parents and carers might be nervous about coming into school so hold workshops in the playground as they drop their child off. Offering food and drink can make people hang around longer and giving away free resources can help too.

School example:

A school set up a Dad's hairdressing event to support Dads in knowing how to style their daughters hair. This not only helped Dads connect with the school and each other in a relaxed environment but also developed quality time for daughters and Dads to talk (daughters were facing away from their Dads as their hair was done, allowing them to open up more. It also empowered the girls as they were often giving tips!). Whilst hairdressing might seem quite distant from education, it gave Dads a safe space to engage, leading them to engage with more formal educational aspects in the future, as well as supporting wellbeing, speaking and listening.
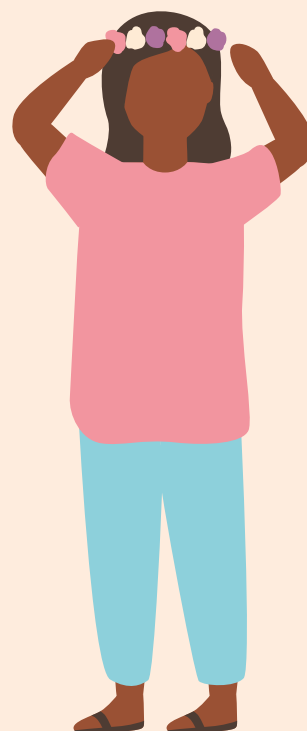
Parent and carer induction

Think about all the induction and transition work you do for your pupils…how can this be mirrored in your work with parents and carers?

Consider home/ school visits for families starting at the school. This can bring great insight into family life, build a positive relationship from the start and communicate expectations clearly.

Induction needs revisiting so consider welcome meetings at the start of the new academic year to revisit expectations, meet new teachers and look at new timetables.
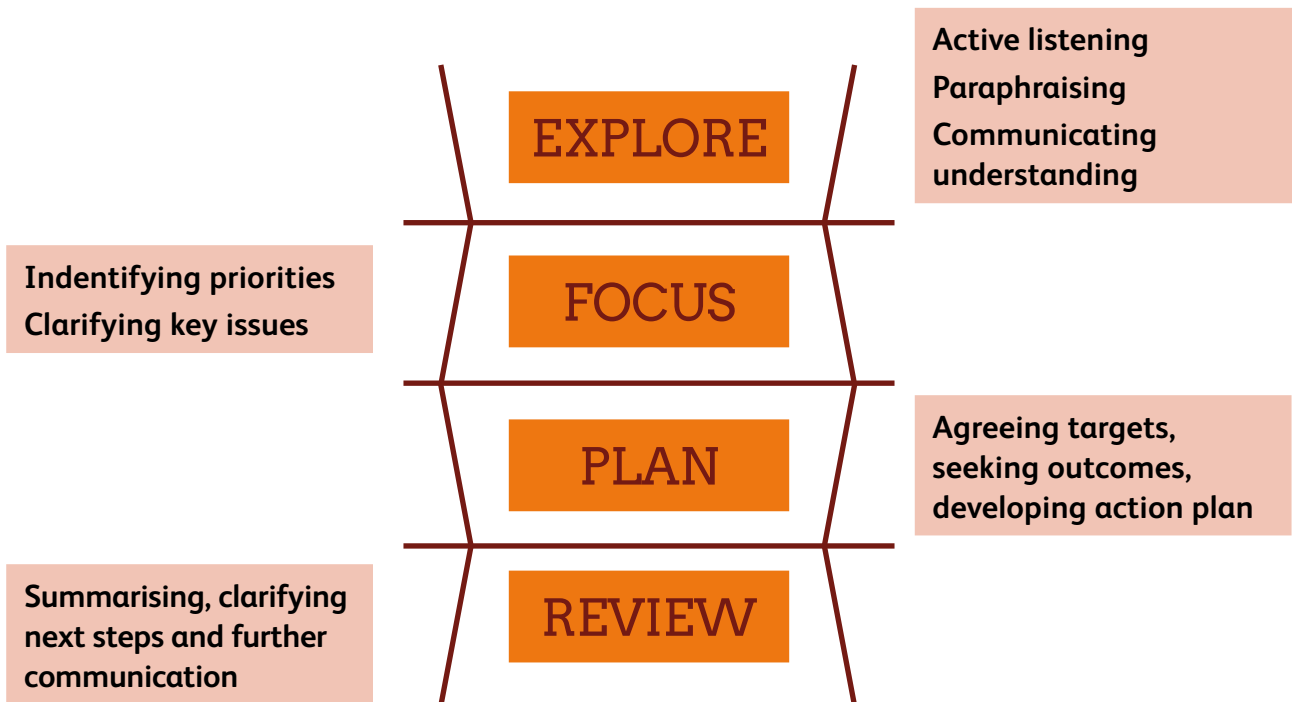
School example:

A school had a very transient population and this meant pupils and their parents/ carers were starting at various points throughout the year and were new to the borough and often the country. They developed a group of parent/ carer champions who would hold welcome meetings (tea, coffee and a chat about uniforms, the school, homework, staff, etc.) and then took parents and carers for a walk around the local community, showing them where the library was, service centre, etc. They were then a friendly face in the playground to answer any questions. They were supported by a member of staff throughout and also offered an "ear to the ground" on any potential issues. The champions represented the diverse school community, including being able to speak a range of languages. The school also invited parents and carers who had barriers to engagement to support their confidence, trust and relationships with school.

Meetings

These can be one of the scariest elements for parents and carers so they need careful consideration. Consider which professionals need to be there so a parent or carer isn't overwhelmed with more school staff and doesn't feel as though there is a power imbalance. Invite parents and carers to bring an advocate if required. Ensure accessibility requirements are understood and catered for (translators, communication, physical access, etc.). Make the environment welcoming and safe (somewhere quiet ideally and not a classroom, provide water and tissues, set up chairs so they are in a semi circle and without any physical barriers such as tables between them). Welcome the parent/ carer and use warm and open body language throughout. Use active listening throughout.

Consider using the structured conversation approach for parent/ carer meetings. Offer staff training on facilitating effective meetings with parents and carers.

The structured conversation approach

Active listening
Paraphrasing
Communicating understanding

EXPLORE

Indentifying priorities
Clarifying key issues

FOCUS

PLAN

Agreeing targets, seeking outcomes, developing action plan

Summarising, clarifying next steps and further communication

REVIEW

Engaging with everyone

Be relentless!

Parents and carers want the best for their children. However, very often previous experiences have created barriers for parents and carers. Imagine something you dread, (let's say a visit to the dentist!) now imagine how your parents and carers can feel about school and education.

Positive interactions!

It is vital that a parent/ carer engagement plan/ strategy/ ethos is understood and lived by all staff. One negative interaction with any member of staff can take several positive interactions before that trust and relationship is built up again so best for everyone to avoid any negative interactions. Develop a guide/ top tips to welcoming guests to the school and make sure everyone knows it and lives it (a smile, hello, etc.). Have a strategy so that every parent/ carer has positive interactions with different members of staff regularly, e.g. phone calls home, postcards, text messages, face to face interactions, etc.

Consider how parents and carers communicate with each other.

Are there any groups that are left out? Do parents/ carers have the opportunity to meet and get to know each other informally?

Listening and responding

It is vital to find ways of listening and responding to parents and carers to build trust, partnership working and improve on practice and provision. As a minimum most schools conduct an annual survey, often using or **adapting parent view questions**.

Schools often find they get better return rates when; they do this survey at a well attended event; they use pupil ambassadors, governors, staff with paper copies and digital to support at the event; all staff understand the importance and promote the completion positively; they display QR codes for the survey around the school; they have key languages translated; and they ensure a "you said, we did" response along with the results is communicated after.

Most schools collect more feedback than this. Some schools might have a particular topic that they want feedback on, e.g. communication and might send out a survey or hold some listening sessions themed around that. Many schools also collect feedback after workshops or events too, sometimes this might just be some comments or a simple yes/ no question. This feedback should be used in meaningful ways to inform future events and approaches. Be creative with how you get feedback so that all parents and carers feel they can engage…one school used bean bags to throw in labelled hoops rating how much they had enjoyed an event.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

By using this toolkit and developing effective partnerships with parents and carers you should prevent many concerns and complaints. However, concerns can be viewed as helpful feedback from parents and carers that if caught quickly and dealt with well can improve things for the school and the relationship with the parents/ carers. It is important that parents have clear pathways for raising concerns and these kinds of concerns are often raised with staff outside of SLT first. It is therefore important that all staff have had training in working effectively with parents and carers and are clear on the school's approach to listening and responding to concerns. Very often, listening to a parent, apologising (when needed) and putting steps in place to ensure the issue doesn't happen again can be enough to prevent it moving to a complaint.

All staff should also know the complaints policy and how to signpost parents and carers to it if they feel their concern has not been addressed and needs to be a formal complaint. If a parent/ carer wants to make a complaint then there should be clear and accessible guidance on the school's website, you might like to also put this information in the reception area too.

Hackney policy can be found here: hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/extranet/school-complaints

Questions governors should be asking around parental engagement

- Do we have a parental engagement policy, statement, vision? How well is this "lived" by all?
- Who leads on parental engagement and what are they focusing on?
- Do governors have regular reports on levels of parental engagement?
- Do surveys have good return rates, positive results and any actions as a result have a clear feedback loop?
- Is parent and carer voice regularly captured formally and informally and used to inform decision making?
- Does staff training include working effectively with parents and carers?
- Does the school regularly consider the barriers that parents and carers might face in effectively engaging and proactively take steps to remove these barriers?

PTAS

A PTA is a group of volunteer parents and teachers who work together to make their school a better environment for children to learn. They raise extra funds through a wide range of fun and creative initiatives, events, and much, much more. They might also be known as HSA, PA, PTFA, Friends of, etc. Not every school has one but they can bring benefits when managed well.

What makes an effective PTA?

Clear remit/parameters/commitment

- Have you co produced clear expectations, parameters, goals, etc. with the PTA?
- Are these shared with new joiners and revisited annually?
- Does the chair/ link staff member have mechanisms to ensure these are working?

Link staff member

- Does a member of staff lead and link with the PTA?
- How do they support the PTA?
- Do they have protected time to meet regularly (at least once a half term with the PTA)?
- Inclusive and representative of school community
- Does the PTA represent the whole school community?
- Does the PTA have a good understanding of the school community and does their work and events reflect this?

Makes a positive difference to school life

- How do you measure the impact the PTA has on the school community?

Clear roles

- Are the different roles in the PTA clearly defined and fairly elected?

Clear lines of communication

- Are there agreed ways in which the PTA communicates with each other, the school and the wider school community?
- How effective is communication?

Aligned to school values/priorities

- How well does the PTAs work align to and drive school values and priorities?

Links/ support:

Easy fundraising: www.easyfundraising.org.uk

Parentkind: www.parentkind.org.uk

How the PTA can support the school:

- Pre loved uniform sales
- Pay for a place on a trip
- School kitchen garden
- Book swap
- Promote school events

EFFECTIVE PLANNING OF PARENT AND CARER EVENTS

Purpose: (reaching all parents/ carers, bringing the community together, giving/ sharing information, giving advice, building relationships, signposting support, celebration,). Identify clear aims and how you know this is needed.

Planning: Have parents/ carers and/ or pupils been involved in the planning?
Have you used knowledge of your community/ previous events to inform this one?
Does the event use techniques that support parent/ carer engagement (e.g. resources to take away, pupils involved/ leading, modelling, signposting, food/social aspect, etc.)

Accessibility: (time, day and location of event, online/ face to face, translations/ interpreters, use of creche, etc.)

Environment: Is the venue a welcoming space?

- Do all parents and carers feel comfortable in that space?
- Do all parents and carers get a warm welcome as they come in?
- Are there refreshments?
- Is there a space for breastfeeding?

Invitations: How do you ensure all parents and carers receive invites to the event? What range of communications do you use (letters, newsletters, email, text, phone class, whatsapp groups, parent reps, pupils, personal invites, etc.)

- Is the purpose of the event made clear to parents/ carers?
- Are the invites accessible for all parents/ carers?
- Does the invite, particularly the language used, support parent/ carer engagement?
- Do parents get a calendar of events at the start of the year and then reminders closer to the event?
- Are events well spaced out over the year and consideration given to religious festivals, important events, etc?

The event: (how well were parents/ carers welcomed? To what extent were the aims of the event met? Has an attendance record been completed?

The evaluation: How is feedback/ reflection taken from parents, carers, staff, etc. to inform future planning?

- If relevant is/ are actions/ changes as a result of the event being communicated to parents/ carers?
- Have you looked at the attendance record and noticed any groups you need to improve engagement with?

CASE STUDY

Capture good practice, either school wide, a specific group or an individual success story.
Please send these to **Laura.Stagg@hackney.gov.uk**

School:	**Date:**

School context:

The challenges:

The implementation of change:

The impact:

Next steps:

FURTHER TRAINING/ WEBINARS

Structured conversations

Active listening skills; getting commitment and support for parents and carers; target setting; sharing pupil progress; effective conversation; and building relationships.

Understanding and removing barriers

Understanding the different barriers parents and carers might have and how this relates to outcomes for pupils. Exploring ways of removing these barriers for your setting.

Emotion coaching

An introduction to an approach to understanding and navigating emotions (our own, parents and cares and pupils). Following the intro more tailored support can be delivered.

Effective events and workshops

Reviewing the effectiveness of your school events and workshops and developing ways we can ensure all parents and carers can support learning.

Useful links and resources

- www.emotioncoachinguk.com/

- www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/parental-engagement

- www.annafreud.org/media/9165/supporting-schools-to-engage-with-all-parents-and-carers-booklet.pdf

- www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988279/DfE_Key_finding_ParentCarer.pdf

- www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182508/DFE-RR156.pdf

- www.nga.org.uk/getmedia/c595884c-0723-4b8f-a5a2-6afca9c5b4aa/nga-engaging-parents-20211126.pdf

- www.docs.google.com/file/d/1U9d4GKyERhNaGnCY7uJZ4Mgyy_H51nzECzqids6Y2VY/view

- https://www.parentkind.org.uk/