

GOOD PRACTICE IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

A Report based on surveys of local authorities in Wales and school visits looking at how to include parents and carers effectively, has recently been published. Previous research has shown that a shared understanding between teachers and parents improves learning outcomes and children benefit from good links between schools and families.

Key findings include:

- The single most important driver in effective parental involvement is the enthusiasm of the head teacher
- When a school's plans and policies involve parents, there is a significant impact on pupil well-being, particularly with regard to behaviour and attendance
- Providing refreshments can encourage involvement from hard-to-reach parents
- Schools with successful records of parental involvement recognised the importance of extended family networks especially grandparents
- Strategies developed by schools to encourage parents to take part in parent evenings included: combining the parents' evening with the governors' annual meeting or a performance by pupils; using the opportunity to display other work, for example to show DVDs of pupils' activities during the year; and following up issues raised by parents during induction at the first formal parents' meeting.
- Strategies for encouraging 'hard to reach' parents to engage with the school included the setting up of a formal 'clinic' after school on a monthly basis for every year group and inviting parents to attend. Parents and pupils looked at the work together and are able to discuss progress with the teacher, including areas of strength and ways that the pupil could improve.
- Schools with good practice in the effective involvement of parents in promoting and supporting improved standards of achievement: offered flexible arrangements for parents' evenings by planning the event over three evenings and sending a second invitation letter to parents who do not respond initially; provided parents with a topic or subject sheet outlining the half-term's or term's work and chose topics where parents could help easily; and recorded stories for parents who did not speak English to follow the book with their child at home.
- Examples of best practice in schools involving parents in pupil learning at school included: drawing on parents or grandparents with appropriate experience to lead school music sessions; and arranging themed activity weeks, for example on healthy eating, and encouraging parents to support the project work at home e.g. by providing artefacts. The week ended with an open day that parents were invited to attend to find out about how pupils developed the topic.

Key recommendations include:

- Ensure that staff build positive relationships with parents by being visible and approachable in the schools and the playground, particularly at the start and end of the day
- Involve parents in initiatives to improve pupils' attendance and behaviour by making expectations and rules very clear, rewarding pupils who improve and including parents in celebrations of success
- Use parents/extended family members as volunteers during the school day and in after-school hours learning where appropriate
- Provide more information for parents, for example, attractive newsletters, websites, e-mail and text messaging Monitor and promote gender and ethnic balance on governing bodies and encourage fathers to become more involved
- Be imaginative and innovative in planning how to involve parents more effectively, particularly those who may need help to develop parenting skills

The full Report is available from: <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports.asp>