



## Closing the attainment gap

# ASSESSING PARENTAL NEED

We know that children and young people who have at least one parent or carer involved in their schooling do better at school. You will get to know most parents by creating an inclusive, fun and connected school community – developing a two-way relationship underpinned by a strong parental involvement strategy.

## Who are you assessing?

Some parents find it more difficult to be involved with their child's school and their child's education. You may need to target particular groups of parents or individual parents in order to understand what their specific needs are.

## What are you assessing?

### Confidence

How confident are parents in their ability to support their child educationally? Are they comfortable in the school setting and in dealing with teachers and other professionals?

### Capacity

What skills and knowledge do parents have to support their child's education and ensure the best possible outcome for their child? Are there any issues with literacy and numeracy? Do they have needs in terms of personal and emotional support, resilience, motivation and commitment?

### Accessibility

What are the barriers that prevent parents from being involved with the school and their child's education? For example: parents whose first language is not English or where involvement with schools may not be a cultural norm; parents who have disabilities, or illnesses that affect their ability to be involved; logistical issues in terms of transport, distance or caring responsibilities; or limited access in their household to resources which support learning such as books, computers and knowledge of how to use them effectively.

### What parents already do

What do parents currently do - in terms of type of activity and quality? For example, parents may read to a child but for how long? How frequently? What type of material? Do they discuss what they are reading? And do they use it to spark off a conversation about other things?

## How you assess

Your aim is to give parents an opportunity to describe their needs as a family in relation to the above. There are a number of ways your school can do this. In many cases it will be a combination of the following:

### Survey

Surveys are an effective way of finding out what parents think in a structured way that enables you to analyse the results. Take into account any accessibility issues and ensure each question uses clear, concise language, avoids jargon and relates directly to the purpose of your survey. How will you feedback results to parents and what are you actually going to do with the results?

### Focus group

Focus groups involve small groups of parents (no more than 6-8 people). A facilitator encourages open discussion, which can give a deeper insight into parents' views than a survey. Will this be a one-off event or a regular meeting? Some parents may be put off if they think it will take up a lot of their time.

### Face-to-face meetings

Some parents may feel uncomfortable in school so using a neutral venue such as a café or community centre can help. Relationships between schools and parents can be greatly enhanced by contact outwith the school. Home visits may also be considered.

### Informal

Simply talking to parents can help build relationships that may lead to more formal methods of involvement. For example, a school ran a breakfast club for families experiencing difficulties. The families were comfortable in this setting and the headteacher used this as an opportunity to have a conversation with them.

### Get the support of partner agencies

Other agencies can provide helpful information on ways to involve parents.

Record parent contact so that all relevant school staff have an understanding of how best to support the family. This will be useful when a child moves from one teacher to another.