



Closing the attainment gap

Evaluating your parental involvement strategy

A robust evaluation will let you know whether your strategy is making a difference. Evaluation is an ongoing process, allowing you to assess as you go whether the strategy is being effective and whether it needs to be changed.

From the beginning, be clear about what impact you want to achieve.

Children and young people who have at least one parent or carer involved in their schooling do better at school in many areas including: assessment scores; attendance; behaviour; transitions; and post-16 destinations. You will need to do a **parental needs assessment** to find out what the specific needs of your local parent community are. Refer to the one-page guidance note on 'Assessing Parental Need'.

The impact you are seeking is that children will do better educationally, with the gap between the highest and lowest achieving being reduced. Your overall aim, therefore, may be to:

'Increase family involvement with the school and their children's learning in order to help close the attainment gap'

The overall objectives for your strategy may sit in the following six dimensions of parental involvement:

Parenting: Increase opportunities for parents to get support with parenting and understanding their child's education and developmental needs.

Communication: Communicate and listen effectively to all parents about their role in their child's education.

Volunteering: Increase opportunities and encouragement for all parents to come into school at different times.

Learning at home: Improve information and advice on the content of the curriculum and how parents can help their children.

Decision-making: Increase the number and diversity of parents involved in parent organisations and committees.

Collaboration with the community: Strengthen links with businesses and agencies in the community.

What are you going to do to achieve your aim and objectives?

There are many activities that make it easier for families to be more involved and help them develop a more positive relationship with the school. The activities that you organise will depend on what your aims are. Some sample activities are below:

- An 'open door' policy that makes it clear parents are welcome to contact the school, or drop in, at any time to discuss any issues they have relating to their child or child's education.
- Hold information events about how parental engagement with a child's learning can improve their educational outcomes.
- Hold family learning events in the school to help build parental skills and knowledge e.g. 'how to help your child with maths'.
- Hold information events in association with local community services (i.e. library service, local college that holds evening classes, other community education groups)
- Find out parents' preferred means of communication, and, using this, send explanatory notes home to accompany homework.



Decide what data you need to collect to measure how effective your strategy is.

Record both quantitative information (numbers), and qualitative information (perceptions), which provide valuable insight into the impact that your strategy is having.

Quantitative information

You might collect the following data in relation to any family events you organise:

- Percentage of school roll whose parents attended
- Number of parents attending who had not previously attended a school event
- Number of parents attending whose children are in the bottom attainment quintile
- A follow-up survey to find out how useful parents found the event and whether it has had a positive impact on their understanding of the subject area
- Impact on children's performance – attainment, behaviour, attendance, punctuality.

You might collect the following data in relation to a new 'Open door' policy that you have introduced:

- How many parents know about the policy
- Whether the policy is making a difference to parent contact (all parents and parents whose children are doing less well educationally)

Qualitative information

Your sense of whether your strategy is working will also come from subtle changes that are less easy measure. For example, subtle changes in how parents interact with the school, anecdotal conversations that you have with parents, or a survey or focus group in which you ask parents to describe how they feel about something and whether their perception of the school has changed.