

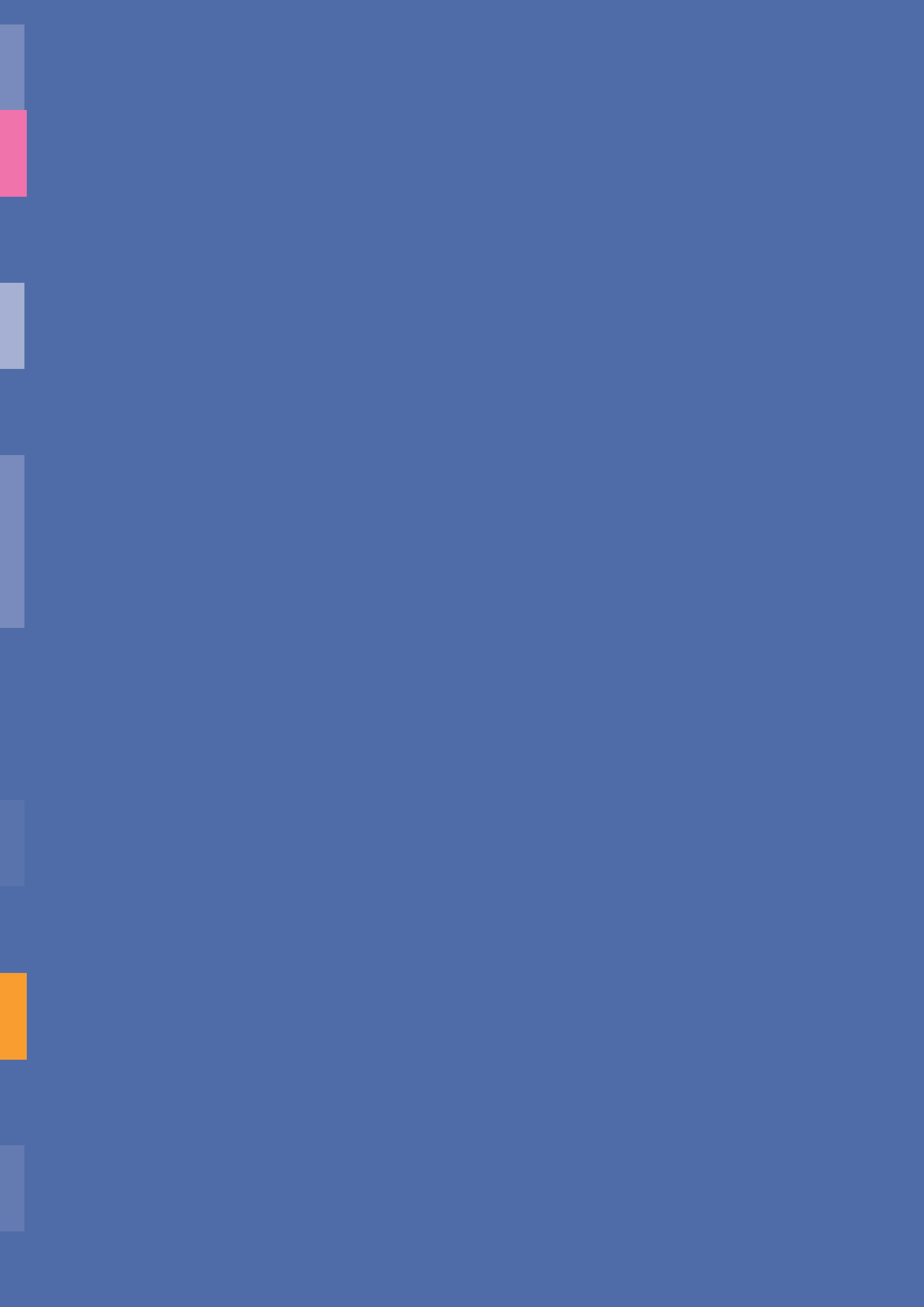


Healthy Schools
Healthier Living & Learning

Engaging Parents and Carers

Guidance for Schools





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Foreword

This document has been written for schools, Local Programme Co-ordinators and other partner agencies involved in the National Healthy Schools Programme. It aims to set out a range of good practice examples and strategies for the effective engagement of parents/carers, including those that are difficult to engage.



How should this document be used?

In this document we look at why it is important for schools to engage with parents/carers as part of the National Healthy Schools Programme, what the current levels of participation are in schools, as well as ways of working with hard to engage parents/carers.

We include a Self Evaluation Tool, found at Appendix 1, to assess current levels of parent/carer participation. The Engagement Summary, found at Appendix 2, will help schools identify the benefits of using particular methods to engage individual parents/carers. It will also allow schools to compare current practice with the ladder of participation found on page 18.

Central to the National Healthy Schools Programme is the Whole School Approach¹ and working with parents/carers is a significant aspect of this. If parents/carers are effectively engaged in school life, they are more likely to participate and play an active role in supporting their children to achieve, and to help schools successfully gain and maintain National Healthy School Status.

In this document the term “parents/carers” will be used to refer to all categories of parent which includes teenage parents, single parents, foster parents, corporate parents (local authority), fathers, same sex parents, parents from vulnerable family groups (e.g. those affected by substance misuse), asylum seeking parents, step parents, recently separated parents, legal guardians, parents with English as a second language and parents with a disability.

Essentially parents/carers will be used to cover any adult or organisation operating within a parenting role, including members of the extended family and local authorities.

Parents/carers are not a homogenous group and as such they have different needs and therefore may require different methods of engagement.

¹National Healthy Schools Programme (2007) Whole School Approach to the National Healthy Schools Programme



Introduction

The Government is keen to promote strong partnerships involving parents/carers and schools. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) White paper Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils (2005)² sets out a commitment to increasing the involvement of parents/carers in schools and ensuring that their voice is heard.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families published the Children's Plan³ which sets out the Government's 10 year plan for children. As well as what it calls a "root and branch" review of English primary education, it also contains plans for parent run school councils and a national panel of parents to advise ministers as part of efforts to join up and improve the school and home experience of children.

The Government proposes to place a further new duty on governing bodies to formally take into account the views of parents/carers.

²DCSF (2005) Higher Standards, Better Schools for All -More Choice for Parents and Pupils

³DCSF (2007) Children's Plan

Why is it important for schools to engage with parents/carers as part of the NHSP?

A Healthy School is a welcoming, open school, which actively includes parents/carers as part of the whole school community. It encourages parental/carer involvement and provides the information and guidance a parent/carer needs to support their child's health, wellbeing, happiness and overall educational success. It achieves this through regular communication and by creating a range of opportunities for parents/carers to be involved in school activities. It will also use effective procedures for feedback, consultation, participation and complaints.

The DCSF document *Every Parent Matters* (2007)⁴ makes clear the Government's view that parents/carers should be empowered to influence and shape public services, such as schools, and begin the national debate as to how parents/carers can be best supported and engaged. It outlines the influential role that parents/carers play in the development of their child's learning and confirms that "parental involvement in a

child's schooling between the ages of 7-16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of family and level of parental education".

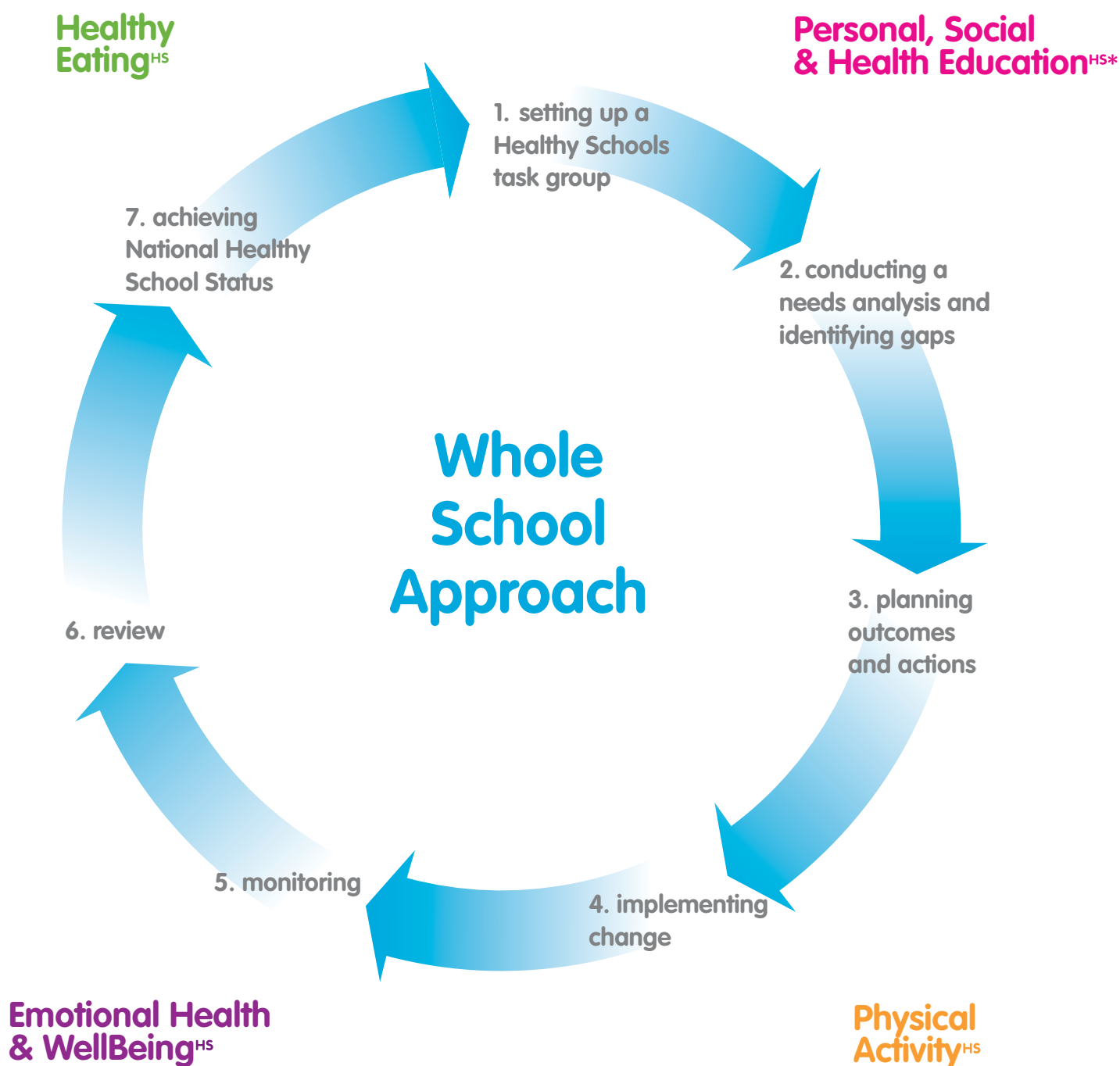
Every Parent Matters draws on research which found that most parents/carers believe that the responsibility for their child's education is shared between parents/carers and schools.

It also highlights that 72 per cent of parents/carers said they wanted more involvement. *Every Parent Matters* outlines further national developments, including:

- greater access to parent/carer support advisers who will link closely with the Extended Schools Agenda
- health-led parent/carer projects
- a National Academy for Parenting Practitioners
- transitional information sessions through Extended Schools Services.

⁴DCSF (2007) *Every Parent Matters*

Healthy Schools are expected to involve parents/carers when setting up their Healthy Schools Task Group. This task group is integral to the Whole School Approach (see diagram below).



*PSHE=Personal, Social, Health and Economic education at Keystage 3

The Ofsted report *Healthy Schools, Healthy Children?* (2006)⁵ found that consultation with parents/carers was a key factor in the extent to which schools were able to successfully promote healthier lifestyles.

A successful home-school relationship can be a key element to making a school stronger and more effective. It can also contribute to achieving the five outcomes which are most important to children and young people, including staying healthy, as set out in *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*.⁶

Ensuring full engagement of parents/carers in the school is an activity that constantly needs to be reviewed and evaluated. Schools need to make sure that they continue to achieve maximum participation and engagement, including with those parents/carers that are described as hard to reach/difficult to engage.

A more recent Ofsted survey, *Parents, Carers and Schools* (2007)⁷ looks into the relationship between parent/carer support and children and young people's learning. It found that all the schools in their survey valued the views of parents/carers views. In addition to this, the best schools:

- encourage parents/carers as active partners
- demonstrate versatility, flexibility and determination in their efforts to engage with parents/carers
- identify precisely how parents/carers can contribute
- evaluate the impact of initiatives and, if they do not work, then change the way in which they are promoted, until they do work.

A good induction arrangement for children and young people was found to be essential in engaging parents/carers successfully and for establishing a working partnership with families, right from the start. Welcoming the extended family into schools is also becoming increasingly important, with a recommendation that schools should actively involve grandparents in their grandchildren's learning.

More and more schools are now providing extended activities, including parenting support. This includes providing access to:

- parenting programmes using structured, evidence based programmes, as well as more information opportunities for parents/carers to engage with the school and each other
- family learning sessions to allow children to learn with parents/carers
- information sessions for parent/carers
- signposting to national and locally available sources of information advice and support.

The Extended Schools Services⁸ increase the opportunities for joint activities with children and young people and parents/carers.

⁵Ofsted (2006) *Healthy Schools, Healthy Children?*

⁶DCSF (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*

⁷Ofsted (2007) *Parents, Carers and Schools*

⁸DCSF (2005) *Extended Schools: Building on Experience*

Case Study

Marsden Community Primary School

Marsden Community Primary school, in Lancashire, has a high number of children of Pakistani origin. It was noticed that it was mainly mothers rather than fathers who participated in most of the extended services school activities.

In an effort to encourage more fathers to participate in activities, a Father and Kids Together club (FAKT) was set up. This club provided weekly activities for fathers and their children including healthy 'cook and eat together' sessions, as well as a range of sporting activities, such as crown green bowling, basketball and indoor 'kwik cricket'.

FAKT got off to a very slow start, with relatively small numbers attending. Posters and flyers were produced as well as staff talking to parents/carers about the project at the school gate. Mothers were also targeted to encourage the fathers to support FAKT. The more successful their efforts, the greater the amount of free time FAKT would be able to generate for the mothers!

The range of strategies used by the school and their overall persistence paid off, as FAKT is now considered a huge success. As a result of the time fathers spend with their children, they have reported anecdotally, that they enjoy an enhanced relationship with their children. Fathers are also more willing to come into school to

support their children's learning. Marsden Community Primary School is hoping to extend the range of clubs that it has on offer to encourage even greater participation.

What are some of the factors that might affect parent/carer participation in schools?

Many parents/carers already acknowledge a willingness to be involved in their child's school and learning. Some parents/carers may need extra help to support their children. For example, some parents/carers may:

- have had a difficult time when they were at school themselves and may lack confidence
- come from backgrounds and cultures where involvement by parents in education is highly discouraged
- have difficulties in engaging with school activities due to working hours and/or location of work.

Some parents/carers will fall into the hard to reach/difficult to engage category and will require an ongoing, targeted approach. These issues are explored in the next section of this guidance.



Working with hard to engage parents/carers

Many schools will be able to identify parents/carers that are reluctant to be involved in their child's learning or school career. These are the so-called "hard to engage" parents/carers. There are many reasons why parents/carers fall within this category and in order to provide support, it is important to know why this is the case. Some of the reasons may include:

- parents/carers with chaotic lifestyles, including those with mental health/ substance misuse issues
- parents/carers with low confidence and self-esteem due to their own difficulties at school
- language barriers
- cultural perceptions (in some countries education is solely the school's responsibility)
- asylum seeking families
- families living in out-of-borough refuges
- families living in bed and breakfast accommodation
- single parents/carers, sometimes working a long way from their child's school
- family work patterns, such as difficult working hours
- family breakdown

- families where one or both parents/carers are involved in the criminal justice system
- long term sick parents/carers
- parents/carers with little interest in their child and their education
- families where domestic violence is an issue
- families where a child is doing well at school and consequently their parents/carers subsequently do not think they need to be involved in their education.

The above is not an exhaustive list and it is important to remember that not attending the school play is very different to never attending when asked by the Headteacher at times of crisis. In many cases engagement can be achieved, but it may take considerable time and effort. It may also be best achieved by staff members, such as key workers, who are attached to but not part of the school.

A strategy which some schools use, is to identify a parent/carer co-ordinator role within their staffing structure. This role can ensure the co-ordination of all aspects of the school's liaisons with all parents/carers, including those who are hard to engage. The role can provide a coherent approach to identifying good practice and areas for school development.

The parent/carer co-ordinator (e.g. a home-school liaison worker) would, over time, assess barriers to engagement and provide the necessary assistance, such as outreach support.

Building a good relationship with the child/young person and their parents/carers is a step nearer to engagement.

Some of the more vulnerable families (e.g. those with substance misuse issues) may require additional support, including co-ordination and liaison with other voluntary and statutory services to affect engagement.

It is useful to remember that eliciting the views of all parents/carers (including those reluctant to be involved) is important if a school is to truly represent the range of needs within its community. This is even more significant with the growth of Extended Schools Services. The whole school approach (see diagram p.9) provides a useful context for seeking the views of all parents/carers. For example, it is beneficial when a school is reviewing its Sex and Relationship Education Policy (SRE) or Drug Education Policy (including incident management) to know how these policies are perceived and the issues that they may raise, particularly within the hard to engage communities.





Ways of engaging with groups of parents/carers

Schools can engage with groups of parents/carers in several ways including:

Transition projects

These can be a good opportunity to reinforce the school's inclusive and welcoming ethos. They can demonstrate the benefits of parent/carer support and the range of services that can be accessed, such as how the school supports the emotional health and wellbeing of their children and young people, both on site and in the community.

Learn together opportunities

The school can take on the role of facilitating joint children, young people and parent/carer sessions on topics such as healthy cooking classes, physical activity classes, or discussing the school's approach to anti-bullying or SRE.

Themed discussion

Small group, themed discussions, based on need and/or arising from outreach work, such as on SRE or healthy eating, can prepare children and young people for puberty or making healthier meals at home. Parents/carers can also be given the opportunity to support a school by contributing to their NHSP National Audit.

Personalised invitations

These can be used to celebrate children and young people's achievements, reward success (no matter how small) and provide parents/carers with a very positive reason to engage with the school.

Language acquisition classes

The school site can be used to host these classes, which in turn, can help to identify parent/carer needs. These classes can encourage peer support, with the more confident speakers supporting or translating for others.

Supporting vulnerable families at coffee mornings

It may be necessary to adopt a "stepped approach" with some parents/carers. For example, after initial home visits there could be supported visits on site to increase confidence.

Extended Schools Services

Schools can provide access to a range of healthcare professionals. These could include dieticians to advise on healthy eating/packed lunches, and other professionals to advise on physical activity or access to smoking cessation classes (which will support the commitment of the National Healthy Schools Programme to smoke-free sites).

Many of the strategies listed here may require a significant amount of effort on the part of the school and may not bring automatic success in the short term. As with all strategies, they will need monitoring, evaluating and refining over a period of time.

Different factors need to be taken into consideration when seeking to engage parents/carers from any group. Also, lack of engagement of parents/carers in school life should not be interpreted as disinterest on their part.

Schools can, and do, engage with parents/carers in many ways. The method and approach taken is influenced by the type of engagement that a school is seeking.

The National Healthy Schools Programme provides schools with a range of opportunities for parental/carer engagement, such as contributing to the NHSP National Audit, membership of the Healthy Schools task group, and policy development and review. Schools can engage with parents/carers as equal partners or as experts. For example, parents/carers may have a particular skill that the school wishes to invest in, such as expertise in healthy cooking, physical activity classes, fundraising, curriculum support or development of policies related to National Healthy School Status.

Schools need to be clear about why they wish to engage with parents/carers, the role that they want parents/carers to play and the structures that are in place to support the engagement of parents/carers. The more effectively and overtly schools can convey that they are inclusive places, which value the range of contributions from parents/carers, the more likely they will engage effectively with them. It is generally useful to establish a culture of thanking parents/carers for their support and contribution to their children's overall achievements.

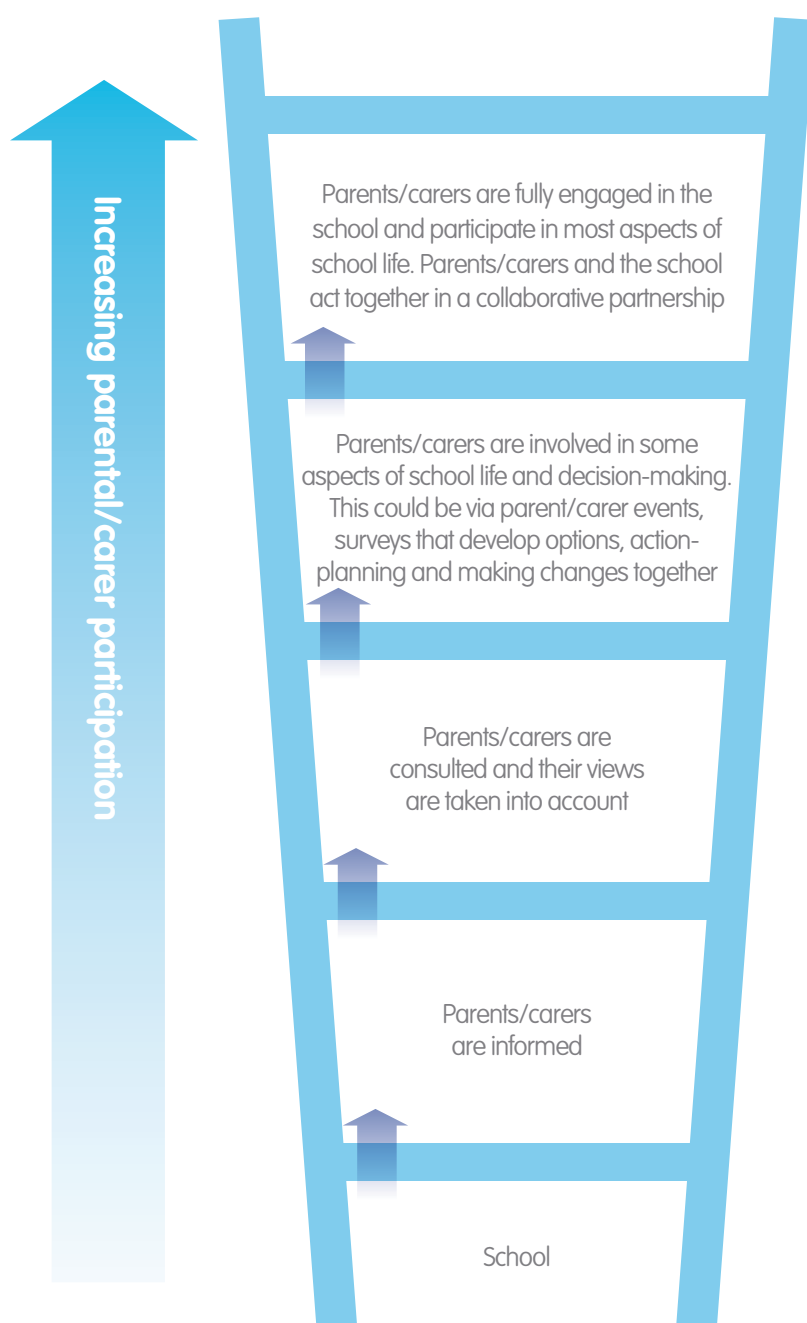


Ladder of parental/carer participation

Different levels of participation can be represented as a "ladder" (see the diagram opposite) in which each rung represents increased empowerment and shared responsibility. Schools should:

- consider the purpose of participation
- consider the diversity of those involved
- ensure it is representative
- select methods carefully
- provide timely feedback
- make participation interesting and rewarding.

Higher levels of participation and engagement from parents/carers can also include challenge and criticism. The school needs to be prepared for this and to deal with it in a constructive and transparent manner.





Leadership and Management

The school's Leadership Team has a significant role to play in the ongoing engagement of parents/carers. Engaging with parents/carers is a whole school matter, which should be well co-ordinated. It should involve all staff but it should also feature as a key task for the Senior Leadership Team.

There should be a shared responsibility for all of those who work on the school site in conveying welcoming messages. It is especially important that any review of practice, policies and protocols involves all staff, especially the site manager and office staff, as these are the people who parents/carers are most likely to meet on arrival.

The Whole School Approach, advocated by the National Healthy Schools Programme provides a model to support change in your school that involves children, young people, staff, parents/carers and governors. The Healthy Schools task group, which represents a cross-section of the school community, could be a useful group to drive this work forward. A suggested action for the task group is to analyse trends, evaluate progress and address issues arising from the school's efforts to engage parents/carers.

This should also include clear review processes against actions that have taken place. Parenting Support, Guidance for Local Authorities (2006)⁹ requires all local authorities to develop a strategic and joined-up design and delivery of parenting support services and a single point for commissioning services across the local authority. The school leadership team, as part of its work within the National Healthy Schools Programme, would benefit from being aware of the parenting strategy of its own local authority and how to access services for parents/carers and influence the commissioning process.

The school leadership team might consider having parental/carer engagement as part of an ongoing programme and to identify this clearly in their School Improvement Plan. A helpful publication, *Materials for Schools, Involving parents, Raising achievement* (2003),¹⁰ combines clear messages about the need to plan strategically to improve parental/carer engagement, with practical examples for both primary and secondary schools to help them achieve this.

Some schools have benefited from identifying a specific lead within the Senior Leadership Team for parental/carer engagement, as well

⁹DCSF (2006) Parenting Support, Guidance for Authorities

¹⁰IPRA (2003) *Materials for Schools, Involving parents, Raising Achievement*

as the role of a parent/carer co-ordinator. The leadership role would include an overview of the effectiveness of parental/carer engagement within the school and would involve reviewing school activities and setting new priorities. The parent/carer co-ordinator's role allows parents/carers to raise issues that are not directly related to their child, especially where parents/carers may wish to give more general feedback and would not normally approach the class teacher or tutor. An example might be a parent/carer who is dissatisfied with the current school meal menu or the approach adopted to minimise bullying. Some schools have a range of staff who can offer this parent/carer co-ordinator role, such as a home-school liaison worker, learning mentor or parent/carer support adviser.

Case Study

Hinde House Secondary School, Sheffield

At Hinde House, an inner city school in Sheffield, it was felt that more should be done to encourage high-quality physical activity among children and young people. A dance tutor was employed and co-ordinated dance lessons throughout the day. Parents/carers were then invited to take part and family dance was introduced as an after-school activity, shared by children, young people and parents/carers.

The activity is fun, beneficial to their relationships and also helps to encourage a healthier lifestyle. The school used an effective strategy to entice parents/carers. The dancing theme was promoted among the children and young people, letters were sent home inviting their parents/carers and they were then reminded of the dance lessons when picking up their children from school. It was marketed as a family dance session that would be free, fun and light-hearted. Parents/carers were told that it would include "a bit of everything" including line dancing and improvisation.

The first after-school club ran for six weeks and was a great success, and the second course was oversubscribed. Parents/carers and their children have found a healthy activity which has allowed them to develop a skill and spend time together.

Using self-evaluation to improve parental/carer participation

A self-evaluation process can help determine where the school is placed in terms of engaging parents/carers and can provide the basis for improving parental/carer participation in the school. When developing mechanisms for listening and acting on feedback from parents/carers it is important to seek the views and contributions of all parents/carers and not only rely on those who regularly contribute or who are most vocal. It is particularly important to try and ensure that the harder to engage families are also able to participate and express their views and ideas.

Self-evaluation can and does take many different forms. One simple technique is to ask the question “how well has the school communicated and engaged with parents/carers in the last year?” in conjunction with completing an audit trail of the previous year. This will enable you to measure the quality and quantity of material and opportunities that parents/carers have been offered, and will provide valuable information that can be worked on to improve participation and engagement.



How have we reached the current position?

Consider:	How well are we working with parents/carers?	How effective are our methods?
Where are we now?	Are parents/carers already helping in activities? If so which ones?	What is working well? How can we build on the positive examples?
	Have we engaged parents/carers in all of the activities in achieving National Healthy School Status?	Are our methods versatile, flexible and determined? Which National Healthy Schools Programme activities had a high parental/carer take up rate?
	If parents/carers are not engaging, do we know why?	Where is our evidence?
	How accessible is the school to parents/carers?	How is this situation monitored? What data do we collect? How is it analysed? How do we know? How often do we evaluate our efforts to engage with parents/carers?
	How are parents/carers made welcome? Is there an opportunity for parents/carers to comment on their overall welcome?	What does their feedback tell us? Have we acted on it?
	Do we know if any groups of parents/carers are under-represented at school activities? If yes, do we know which groups and why?	What strategies are in place to deal with this? Has there been any improvement of engagement with under-represented groups?
	Have we focused on consultation and information sharing rather than participation involving decision-making?	Do we monitor this? Can we improve the level of participation?



Where do we want to be in the future?

Consider:	What do we need to consider?	What methods could we use?
Where do we want to be?	<p>How effective can our communications systems with parents/carers be?</p> <p>How best can we communicate with hard to engage parents/carers?</p> <p>How can we encourage parents/carers to become involved in the school?</p> <p>Could our parents/carers be more involved in the activities linked to our participation in the National Healthy Schools Programme?</p> <p>Can we involve our parents/carers through extended activities?</p> <p>How can we move up the Ladder of Participation? (See Pg.18).</p>	<p>What monitoring and evaluation can we use to ensure we keep improving these?</p> <p>How do we ask the views of hard to engage parents/carers?</p> <p>What is working well? How can we build on this?</p> <p>Have we involved the Local Programme Co-ordinator for the National Healthy Schools Programme to identify examples of best practice?</p> <p>Have we involved the support of the Local Authority's Extended Schools Adviser?</p> <p>Are there any other partners or organisations that we should be working with?</p>
How will we know we have got there?	<p>How can we measure the level of participation as a baseline?</p> <p>What level of success are we looking for and how will we measure it?</p>	<p>Have we included ...</p> <p>Specific</p> <p>Measurable</p> <p>Achievable</p> <p>Realistic</p> <p>Timescaled</p> <p>... targets/objectives?</p>
When will we have achieved this?	<p>Do we have clear deadlines?</p> <p>Have we prioritised our actions?</p>	<p>Do we have a good monitoring system in place to ensure we are in line to meet deadlines?</p> <p>Does everyone know our priorities and why they are priorities?</p>

Parental/carer participation and Ofsted's Self-Evaluation Form

Using the NHSP National Audit to address issues raised in Section 2 of Ofsted SEF

Since September 2005, the school Self Evaluation Form (SEF) required as part of an Ofsted school inspection, has asked schools to capture how they gather the views expressed by parents/carers and to give examples of action taken, based on the views of parents/carers.

The SEF should convey a clear picture of how well the school is doing and show what is being done to build on successes and remedy weaknesses. The SEF commentaries are expected to be evaluative and not descriptive, with inspectors looking for clear judgements that are supported by evidence linked to outcomes for children and young people. The SEF should provide proof of "how you know what you know".

To help ensure the active participation of parents/carers in the learning and development of their children, the School Leadership Team, staff and governors should

know how well their school involves parents/carers in decision-making and policy development, implementation and review.

The table on the next page provides an illustration of how the NHSP National Audit could help school self-evaluation and provide evidence to support judgements made by the school relating to its performance. Section 2 of the SEF poses a series of questions relating to the views of parents/carers and how the school responds to these. These are:

- **2a** How do you gather the views of parents/carers, how often do you do this and how do you ensure impartiality?
- **2b** What do the views of parents/carers tell you about learners' personal development and wellbeing?
- **2c** How do you share with parents/carers the collated findings about their views?

It is in Section 2 of the SEF that much of the school's work in involving parents/carers in the promotion of healthy lifestyles can be reported.

Using the NHSP National Audit to address issues raised in Section 2 of Ofsted SEF

NHSP Criteria	Minimum Evidence (relevant to this guidance)	Questions for parents/carers	Links to other sections of the SEF
<p>Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)*</p> <p>1.5 Has up-to-date policies in place developed through wide consultation, implemented, monitored and evaluated for impact – covering Sex and Relationship Education, Drug Education and Incidents, Safeguarding, and Confidentiality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people, staff and parents/carers have been consulted about these policies. • Children, young people, staff and other relevant stakeholders can outline their role in the review of these policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know who to talk to if you have comments or questions relating to the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sex and Relationship Education - Drug education and incidents - Safeguarding - Confidentiality? 	Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4a, 4b, 4d, 4f, 6a, 7c
<p>1.6 Has an implemented Non-Smoking Policy in line with smoke-free legislation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people, staff, parents/carers and governors have been involved in the development and implementation of a smoke-free site. • The school is proactive in providing information and support for smokers to quit e.g. promoting access to smoking cessation classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you know that the school is a smoke-free site? • Does your child receive information about the dangers of smoking? • Can your child access support to quit smoking? 	Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4a, 4e, 4f, 6a, 7c
<p>Healthy Eating</p> <p>2.3 Has a Whole School Food Policy – developed through wide consultation, implemented, monitored and evaluated for impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people, staff, parents/carers, governors and caterers are/have been involved in policy development and can describe their involvement. • A policy is available covering all aspects of food and drink at school, including appropriate curriculum links, reference to policy regarding packed lunches/food brought into school and children or young people going off-site to purchase food. • The policy is referred to in the school prospectus/profile. • The policy is regularly communicated to the entire school community. • The policy and its impact is reviewed to reflect current DCSF standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your child enjoy eating at school? • Are you aware of the school's Food/Healthy Eating Policy? • What does your child say about lunchtimes? 	Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4d, 4e, 6a, 7c

<p>2.4 Involves children, young people and parents/carers in guiding food policy and practice within the school, enables them to contribute to healthy eating and acts on their feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and parents/carers are/have been involved in guiding the school's Food Policy and can describe their involvement. • Children, young people and parents/carers agree that their feedback relating to policy has been appropriately considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you been involved in your child's school food policy? • Has involvement in your child's school food policy had any impact on healthy eating at home? 	<p>Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4a, 4d, 4e</p>
<p>Physical Activity 3.7 Encourages children, young people, staff and parents/carers to walk or cycle to school under safer conditions, utilising the School Travel Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers have received information regarding the School Travel Plan via newsletter articles/ letters etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of the school's physical activity programme? • Has it made a difference to your own physical activity levels at home and that of your children? • Are you aware of how physical activity is implemented in the school and what standards are set? 	<p>Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4a, 4b, 4e, 6a, 7c</p>
<p>3.8 Gives parents/carers the opportunity to be involved in the planning and delivery of physical activity opportunities and helps them to understand the benefits of physical activity for themselves and their children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers are aware of the opportunities to learn about the benefits of physical activity. • Parents/carers say they are actively encouraged to take part in the planning and delivery of physical activity. • Most parents/carers report that they know why physical activity is good for them and their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the school helped to enhance your understanding of the benefits of physical activity? 	<p>Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 5c</p>
<p>Emotional Health and Wellbeing 4.6 Has a clear policy on bullying, which is owned, understood and implemented by the whole school community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and parents/carers know and understand the policy on bullying and feel that they have the opportunity to regularly discuss its implementation. • The school has a system that ensures prompt reporting back to parents/carers on any concerns raised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been involved in the development of the Anti-Bullying Policy? • Do you know how to report if your child is being bullied? • If you make a complaint about bullying, are you kept fully informed of the progress of your complaint? 	<p>Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4b, 4d, 4e, 6a, 7c</p>
<p>4.9 Has a clear Confidentiality Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and staff are consulted on the development and the renewal of the Confidentiality Policy. • Children, young people and parents/carers are aware of the Confidentiality Policy and understand what it means for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your child understand the school's confidentiality policy? • Do you know what will happen with information that you share with the school? 	<p>Ofsted self-evaluation 2a, 2b, 2c, 4b, 4d, 4e, 6a, 7c</p>

Tools and Techniques

It is recognised that every school is unique and each school will have its own priorities in terms of parental/carer engagement and participation. Some strategies are universal and suitable for all schools, while others will be more appropriate for specific key stages, rural or urban settings, special or mainstream schools. Some of the factors that affect levels of parental/carer participation might include:

- parents/carers living some distance from the school in rural areas
- parents/carers that have children transported on buses or in taxis
- parents/carers with medical and/or special educational needs who themselves may find it difficult to engage with their child's school
- working parents/carers including those with shift patterns.

The table, Self-review of participation with parents/carers Appendix 1, provides a summary and analysis of the activities that schools could use to inform, consult and engage with parents/carers. For each new or revised activity there is likely to be both a benefit and a cost attached to the activity. These need to be weighed up in order to decide whether it is an effective activity for a specific school. If schools are introducing

new activities, it is worth noting that they may take time before yielding satisfactory or better results. Perseverance, effective communication and a stepped approach should all be considered and are likely to prove invaluable. Success criteria should be considered prior to implementing a new activity to engage parents/carers in school life.

Comparing the school's current practice to the activities listed on the self-review table can provide useful analysis. Here are some points to consider:

- are any of the examples similar to those you are already using? Can they be improved? If so how?
- what examples have you not yet considered? How would you implement them?
- can you extend your current good practice further?
- how can you ensure that you achieve the highest level of participation and engagement?
- how can you move the school beyond the information level and up the participation ladder?

Case Study

Phoenix High School, London

Phoenix High School in West London has introduced several schemes to engage parents/carers as part of its application for National Healthy School Status. In March 2007 it hosted a healthy living week which included a healthy living evening. Specifically aimed at parents/carers, the event consisted of a number of stands providing health related information. Blood pressure and cholesterol checks were offered and parents/carers also had the chance to taste the school's healthy dinners. To engage parents/carers in this event, flyers and letters were sent home and some were also invited by telephone.

To overcome anticipated reluctance from parents/carers who spoke English as a second language, the school informed them that bilingual assistants would be on hand to help if needed. More than 120 parents/carers and their children attended the event and the feedback was positive. They said they appreciated the health checks and information, as well as the healthy food and goody bags provided.

As part of its drive to support learning outside the classroom and the wider community

health, the school has created a 'farm' and learning zone on its site. This development allows it to grow fruit and vegetables on the site. Some produce is given back to the school and used in school meals, which further engages parents/carers in healthy eating.



Case Study

Westhaven School, North Somerset

Westhaven School is a purpose built school for children and young people aged between 7 and 16, with complex barriers to their learning. It has successfully engaged parents/carers through a Parent Support Group, which the parents themselves named "Time Out". Time Out is held on a monthly basis. Parents/carers attend the workshops during school hours to alleviate the need for childcare.

The two hour-long sessions are run by the school nurse and the parent support advisor. Topics such as emotional support and anger management are covered and experienced parents/carers come in to discuss relevant issues. The workshops have been crucial in securing Westhaven School's National Healthy School Status.

The school admits children and young people with a wide range of complex needs and has long understood that emotional health must be promoted amongst parents/carers so that their child remains confident and positive, and the parents/carers feel valued. The parents/carers are initially informed about the Time

Out workshops during the personal meeting with the Headteacher, prior to their child joining the school. This is followed up with a letter and then further promoted through a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) stall and the school website.

The feedback from parents/carers on the Time Out initiative is positive, with frequent requests for more workshops and family learning events. The school says that establishing a strong relationship with parents/carers is a great achievement because many of their pupils live over thirty miles away and are taken to and from school in minibuses, minimising contact with the parents/carers.

The literature review by Professor Charles Desforges, *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment*¹¹ DCSF (2003) found:

- parental/carer involvement diminishes as the child gets older
- parental/carer involvement is influenced by the child's attitude
- the higher the level of attainment of a child the greater the parental/carer involvement.

¹¹Desforges (2003) *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment*, DCSF

Conclusion

Working with parents/carers is not a new idea for schools and all schools will experience varied degrees of success. It is hoped that this guidance will encourage schools to self-evaluate and co-ordinate their work as they try to engage all parents/carers.

Regular feedback from parents/carers will help to inform school strategy. In some cases success may be limited to the knowledge that the school has built a positive relationship with the majority of its parent/carer community, but still needs to find ways to effectively engage with its hard to reach/reluctant to engage parents/carers.

Best practice asks: What is currently working? **Next practice asks:** What could work more powerfully? The latter results from pursuing a different approach to the situation.

The case studies in this guidance serve to illustrate the work that has taken place in schools which have achieved or are working towards achieving National Healthy School Status. As new and relevant case studies emerge, they will be added to the National Healthy Schools Programme website for all to share and be inspired by.

Useful Websites

www.dcsf.gov.uk

www.dh.gov.uk

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

www.healthpromotingschools.co.uk

www.healthyschools.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

www.teachernet.gov.uk

www.familyandparenting.org

www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

References

1. National Healthy Schools Programme (2007) Whole School Approach to the National Healthy Schools Programme
2. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2005) Higher Standards, Better Schools for All -More Choice for Parents and Pupils
3. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) Children's Plan
4. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) Every Parent Matters
5. Ofsted (2006) Healthy Schools, Healthy Children?
6. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2004) Every Child Matters: Change for Children
7. Ofsted (2007) Parents, Carers and Schools
8. Department for Children, Schools and Families CSF (2005) Extended Schools: Building on Experience
9. Department for Children, Schools and Families (2006) Parenting Support, Guidance for Authorities
10. IPRA (2003) Materials for Schools, Involving parents, Raising Achievement
11. Desforges (2003) The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment, Department for Children, Schools and Families

Appendix 1

Self-review of participation with parents/carers

This tool will help schools assess their current level of parent/carer participation.

Level of Participation	Audience	Activity
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers	Letters, newsletters, booklets
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers	Ensuring a welcoming approach to parents/carers
Level 1 Information	Accessible to those with the internet. Audience could be increased by making the internet available to parents/carers in a library or designated room for parents/carers	School website
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers	Notice boards and other information available at the school site
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers, but especially target the hard to reach parents/carers	Reminders including text, email and letters
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers	Inviting parents/carers into school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personalised invitations to events • piggy backing on other successful well-attended events • events requested by parents/carers e.g. meetings or workshops on Sex and Relationship Education • workshops initiated by the school e.g. running a workshop for parents/carers on healthy eating • attending school celebration events or sports activities.
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers and targeted parent/carer groups	Marketing events
Level 1 Information	All parents/carers and selected hard to reach groups	Developing links with parent/carers within their own local communities e.g. attending and hosting community events

Benefit	Some examples of good practice
Quick, low cost method that can reach a large number of parents/carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well presented • eye catching design • clear key messages in relation to the National Healthy Schools Programme • available in other languages • plain English • parents/carers involved in the content.
High parental/carer involvement in all school activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents/carers feel welcome at the school • all staff actively welcome parents/carers • reception area is open and welcoming • National Healthy Schools Programme information on notice boards • parents/carers understand all the different staff roles • parent/carer co-ordinator available for all • schools use feedback from parents/carers to make school more accessible.
Once set up, this is an effective method of communication with parents/carers as long as the family has access to the internet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appealing, up-to-date website with a range of information • website designed by children, young people and parents/carers in conjunction with school staff • dedicated section for National Healthy Schools Programme information • National Healthy Schools Programme information placed on the website with regular updates • activities advertised to encourage healthy eating and physical activities • advice available on issues like bullying and school menus.
Quick and effective method of passing on information to those that visit the school site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notice boards in accessible positions • includes a National Healthy Schools Programme section • signposting to more detailed National Healthy Schools Programme information and contact details e.g. School Food Trust, NHS.
Reminders encourage a higher level of attendance at school events and participation in school activities. They are an effective way of reducing non-attendance and therefore time wasted when staff put on activities with a low turnout of parents/carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and email alerts used to remind parents/carers • reminders used to prompt parents/carers to attend National Healthy Schools Programme events, e.g. healthy cooking sessions and physical activities • the school has assessed which type of reminder is most effective for their community • follow up reminders sent out about National Healthy Schools Programme events.
Face-to-face meetings allow more detailed personal contact with parents/carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all staff are skilled in meeting and welcoming parents/carers including those less likely to come into school • the school environment is open and welcoming including the provision of refreshments and crèche facilities • a comprehensive range of activities are available at different times of the day/week/year to accommodate parents/carers • parents/carers can attend Healthy Schools workshops e.g. cooking healthy meals • new events are added each year and less popular events taken out of the school calendar • information sessions are provided e.g. Drug Education and anti-bullying • events for parents/carers together with their children are provided e.g. cookery sessions and sports activities.
Effective marketing will result in a higher level of parental/carer participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • views are sought from parents/carers on a full range of marketing activities • parents/carers are involved in the school's marketing and communications strategy e.g. for the development and implementation of the School Travel Plan • marketing at parent/carer evenings for Healthy Schools events.
The school will better understand the needs and views of parents/carers who don't usually engage in school activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific families are targeted to support their engagement in school activities e.g. visit to traveller site by the parent liaison officer to raise health issues.

Level of Participation	Audience	Activity
Level 2 Consultation	All parents/carers who attend	Parent/carer consultation evenings Consultation and engagement in transition work
Level 2 Consultation	Target a particular year group, key stage or topic e.g. Sex and Relationship Education	"Bring a parent/carer to school" session. Sessions could include attending a session on anti-bullying or on literacy
Level 2 Consultation	Targeted to specific groups of parent/carers e.g. hard to reach families	Outreach work
Level 2 Consultation	All parents/carers	Parent/carer survey
Level 3 Decision-making	All parents/carers	Organising and hosting joint events Building on the skills of parents/carers
Level 3 Decision-making	All parents/carers	Jointly organising workshops on the four core themes within the National Healthy Schools Programme
Level 3 Decision-making	All parents/carers	A jointly organised focus group on one of the four core themes within the National Healthy Schools Programme
Level 4 Collaborative Partnership	Selected year groups	After-school physical activity programme
Level 4 Collaborative Partnership	All or a selected cross-section of parents/carers	Reviewing and/or developing policies e.g. whole school Food Policy, Behaviour Policy or Drug Education Policy
Level 4 Collaborative Partnership	Focus group of parents/carers	Re-design the "lunch-time experience". Involve parents/carers in the entire process from gathering information, consultation on changes, implementation and review

Benefit	Some examples of good practice
Opportunity to share views between staff and parents/carers on a reciprocal basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school engages with parents/carers on a regular basis as part of the Whole School Approach e.g. Healthy Schools task group • parents/carers are consulted through the Healthy Schools section on the school website • consultation events are “real” consultation, and feedback is used to shape school policy and practice e.g. the school Food Policy • feedback from subject based tutors (or class teachers) is co-ordinated to ensure the health and wellbeing of children and young people is carefully monitored • feedback indicates that parents/carers feel valued as key partners in their child’s success at school.
Impact can be significant in terms of increasing the parents’/carers’ understanding of the National Healthy Schools Programme and the curriculum in general. It helps to build the relationship between staff and parents/carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a rolling cycle targeting both topic areas and year groups is in place • feedback is always sought from parents/carers and acted upon • parents/carers are involved in deciding what sessions should be offered • parents/carers of more vulnerable children and young people are targeted and supported to attend.
Outreach work is particularly successful in engaging some of the hard to reach families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a wide group of school-based staff and visiting professionals actively aim to engage hard to reach parents/carers • school nurse and other staff are involved in engaging targeted families in physical activities • protocols exist for information sharing • quality training is in place for staff taking part in this work including health and safety procedures • evaluation feedback is sought from parents/carers.
Parent/carer survey can provide invaluable quantitative and qualitative data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • surveys are completed on a regular basis and parents/carers are encouraged to respond honestly • response rates are high and action is taken based on the feedback • findings and analysis is fed back to parents/carers.
Having a higher level of parental/carer involvement in decision-making should ensure that more parents/carers attend and participate as they feel directly involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • events have been requested and organised with full parental/carer involvement. These are outside the normal PTA type activities • activities make full use of the skills of parents/carers in the school, e.g. a parent/carer who is a health professional running a health based workshop or a gardener running a “growing healthy food” session • parents/carers are involved in some of the Extended Schools Services activities e.g. taking netball sessions • parents/carers are provided with training which may sometimes be alongside other school staff e.g. bullying awareness.
Joint organisation and delivery will ensure that parents/carers will have a more detailed understanding of the National Healthy Schools Programme and the role they can play in supporting it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a programme of workshops for parents/carers is organised across the school year with each of the four NHSP core themes represented • options in relation to school policy and practice are discussed and decisions made e.g. School Travel Plans.
Joint production of a health survey for children and young people on healthy lifestyles will raise parents’/carers’ knowledge of the theme and awareness of the implications for their children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular surveys are completed on perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies • focus group of children and young people asked to comment on school processes e.g. lunch-time experience, physical activities offered by the school • effective school council in place which gives reports to both staff and parents/carers.
A high level of participation at all stages will ensure the success of the programme and ensure that it is responsive to parent/carer needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents/carers are fully involved in devising and delivering a full physical activity programme • the content and delivery of the programme is amended based on feedback from parents/carers.
Parents/carers have a higher degree of understanding of the rationale, purpose and operational arrangements of delivering and implementing key policies in the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents/carers have been fully involved in the policy development • they have influenced the policy formation and are supporting its delivery • parents/carers are champions of policies related to the National Healthy Schools Programme.
A process of continual improvement exists to ensure the lunch-time session is continually improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents/carers seek ongoing feedback from their children on a regular basis and improve the “lunch-time experience” • regular satisfaction surveys are completed by children, young people and parents/carers • parents/carers feel their views are valued • data is regularly sought and confirms a positive experience at lunch-time e.g. less incidents of bullying reported during lunch-time.

Appendix 2

Engagement summary

The following table provides further information and allows you to compare your current practice with the ladder of participation and varying levels of good practice.

Levels of parental/carer engagement and participation (ladder)	Essential Practice
<p>Parents/carers are fully engaged in the school and participate in most aspects of school life. Parents/carers and the school act together in a collaborative partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and regular involvement of parent governors at governing body meetings and a clear process for seeking parents'/carers' views and providing feedback. • Parents/carers consulted on key policies e.g. relevant draft policies are placed on the school website and parents/carers invited to comment. • The school takes every opportunity to involve the parents/carers of children or young people in care. This may include foster carers, social workers and other significant adults in the child or young person's life.
<p>Parents/carers are involved in some aspects of school life and decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/carer evenings made accessible to as many parents/carers as possible e.g. flexible start and finish times.
<p>Parents/carers are consulted and their views are taken into account</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback requested on a regular basis e.g. termly questionnaires. • Clear process for parents/carers to offer suggestions. • Clear process to make a complaint.
<p>Parents/carers are informed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular school letter to parents/carers e.g. with a dedicated section for the National Healthy Schools Programme. • All material sent to parents/carers such as newsletters, prospectuses and letters are accessible, easy to read and in appropriate languages. • Clear point of contact for parents/carers, when they come into or contact school by telephone. • School reception area is welcoming to all parents/carers. • Regular reporting of a child or young person's progress. • School has a programme of events that is offered at different times in the school day to cater for shift and other working patterns. • A record is kept of the information shared with parents/carers. • Invitation to parents/carers to visit the school before their child starts in reception and on an ongoing basis. • Information leaflet that describes the curriculum.

Best Practice	Exemplary Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meeting and sharing between parent governors and other parents/carers e.g. with parents/carers on the Healthy Schools task group. • Parents/carers (other than parent governors) involved in reviewing the School Improvement Plan. • Parents/carers involved in the drawing up of policy documents e.g. policies relating to sensitive issues such as SRE or Drug Education. • The school is aware of the skills of their parent/carer group and encourages parents/carers to run sport and other activities as part of the Extended Schools Services offer. • Parents/carers are encouraged to volunteer their help e.g. re-decoration of the dining hall, careers talks, or helping on sports day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of parental/carer engagement organised jointly by the Headteacher, governors, parent/carer representatives and relevant others for a range of parents/carers. • Parents/carers directly involved in reviewing the policy for working with parents/carers and families. • Parents/carers involved in a cross-curricular working group with a brief to develop the home-school area. • School can demonstrate how it has engaged with all parents/carers and the outcomes of the engagement e.g. monitoring of packed lunch contents. • Parents/carers involved in the review of existing policies and development of new policies. • Implementation of adult and peer mentoring schemes for parents/carers, children and young people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback requested about parent/carer evenings and responded to. • Imaginative homework tasks introduced to involve families e.g. inventing a new healthy lunch option with parents/carers. • Workshops run for parents/carers to encourage their practical involvement and support in key areas e.g. sports coaching. • Access to professionals who visit the school e.g. school nurse or educational psychologist. • Themed events based on the four core themes within the National Healthy Schools Programme. • Access to training e.g. family, SEAL. • "Bring your parent/carer to school" days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular evaluation of parent/carer evenings and involvement of parents/carers in the running of them. • The school offers alternatives to parent/carer evenings e.g. tutor meetings or alternative times or venues to encourage attendance. • Opportunities provided to meet with parents/carers who have not attended the parents/carers evening e.g. offer home visits. • Programme of support sessions for parents/carers e.g. healthy eating, emotional intelligence. • Involvement of both mothers and fathers is monitored. • Members of the extended family are encouraged to be involved e.g. grandparents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school surveys, including samples e.g. year groups, parents/carers of new intake or at transition. • Home-school agreements are reviewed and updated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school surveys with focus groups that include hard to reach parents/carers, new parents/carers, parents/carers that have had a difficult relationship with the school. • Parents/carers are involved in a number of curricular areas in the school e.g. practical cookery, physical activity, career talks. • Parent/carer surveys to find out when it is most convenient to have meetings, and offer a range of times to suit all parents/carers. • Creative use of homework diaries to allow parents/carers to give regular feedback. • Home-school agreement is a dynamic changing document and commitment, and forms a key focus in engaging parents/carers in the school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well published school letter amended as a result of feedback from parents/carers. • The use of suggestions boxes or "surgeries" to seek views from parents/carers that are less vocal. • Access to a high quality interactive website. • Offer of open door sessions on a regular basis. • School tries a range of communication techniques e.g. website, text and desk top alerts to keep parents/carers informed. • Seeks feedback on the reporting process and makes relevant amendments based on it. • Reviews whether the information on topics such as Sex and Relationship Education is shared with parents/carers and has been effective in supporting discussions with their children. • An opportunity to hear from teachers about the curriculum for the year. • Termly/annual calendar of events produced for parents/carers that is also placed on the school website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well published school letter with National Healthy Schools Programme section that has changed in format and content as a result of parental/carer feedback and perhaps designed by children and young people. • Information provided that parents/carers have asked for, well in advance of the date. • Regular reminders of key events e.g. through follow up text messages. • Parent/carer room or area within school that is welcoming and provides access to the school's website and ICT. • An opportunity to observe the class and attend joint child and parent/carer sessions. • An opportunity as a parent/carer to give feedback to the school outside of the parent/carer evening e.g. a drop-in session with governors. The feedback is then acted upon in a constructive manner. • School achieves the Leading Parent/Carer Partnership Award.

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