

Parental Engagement and the impact it has on children's Attendance

What are the benefits of parental engagement?

| For Children | For parents | For the setting/childminder |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increased attendance at the setting/childminders. | Increased support from the setting/childminder. | Setting/childminder can access parents' skills to complement teaching and learning. |
| Improved attainment and achievement. | Increased confidence and skills. | Behaviour and attendance improves. |
| Increased motivation. | Shared understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. | Children are more settled, good learning of development. |
| Higher levels of confidence and self-esteem. | Raised aspirations. | Improved staff morale. |
| Better social skills. | Advice to improve the Home Learning Environment. | Improved relationships between the setting/childminder and local community. |
| Improved behaviour. | A better network of support to help with concerns. | Better communication between setting/childminder and home. |

"Parents being engaged with their children's learning in the form of 'at home good parenting' has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation."
(Desforges, C., Abouchaar A., 2003)

Top tips for parental engagement.

1. Reassure parents who may not perceive themselves to be 'clever enough' to help their children with the EYFS, and who may feel defeated about becoming more involved, that they are doing the right thing for their children
2. Provide additional support and guidance for parents in helping their children learn. Share information about the Early Years Foundation Stage [What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/what-to-expect-in-the-eyfs-complete-final-16.09-compressed.pdf) ([foundationyears.org.uk](https://www.foundationyears.org.uk))
3. Inform parents about their child's care and development so that they can support the child, even though the assumption may be that the child is 'coping fine' on their own.

Parental Engagement and the impact it has on children's Attendance

4. Provide information to all parents, even those that live separately from the child. This is paramount and ensures that the parents are included.
5. Think about how to involve grandparents and other significant family members who may also have a 'parenting' function.
6. Identify the barriers preventing parents from engaging and what the school can do to break down these barriers

Improving learning outcomes through attendance.

There is never one reason why a child's attendance is poor. But there is irrefutable research evidence to suggest that the more time they spend in a high-quality Early Years setting, the better the learning outcomes are for that the child.

Ensuring good attendance is an integral part of all settings and local authorities' work, on the basis that good attendance:

- Promotes children's welfare and safety.
- Ensures every child has access to their statutory entitlement to Early Years Education Funding.
- Ensures successful learning outcomes for children
- Ensures access to the widest possible range of opportunities in preparation for school.

All settings should have an Attendance and Behaviour policy. It is the responsibility of the setting to ensure that the policy is available to all parents on registering their child at pre-school. Parents must be regularly informed of any revisions or updates that could impact on their role as parents to support good attendance and behaviour at the setting. See the Early Years Attendance Guidance and Policy in the Early Education toolkit.

Effective communication with parents

This can be done through a number of different ways, for example through conversations, letters and phone calls or email and texting. A variety of formal and informal methods of communication are established in settings to inform parents about general information, events and the child's development, attendance and behaviour, as well as information relating to the settings policies and procedures.

However, research has confirmed that positive relationships through parents chosen methods of communication greatly enhance and support a child's learning and development. The Children's Workforce Development Council (2008) highlights elective communication and engagement as one of the six common core areas of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce:

- Effective communication and engagement - Good communication is central to working with children, young people and their families. It involves listening, questioning, understanding and responding to children and those caring for them.

Home-school communication is among the most important factors in developing strong relationships between teachers and families.

Parental Engagement and the impact it has on children's Attendance

(Epstein, J. (1996). Family/school/community partnerships: caring for the children we share)

Supporting effective communication

Through communication we develop our capacity to understand others and to understand the emotion behind the communication, which in turn helps to build positive relationships, resolve potential difficulties and create a shared understanding. Communication includes emotions, and it is important to recognise the impact that various approaches, attitudes and behaviours may have when talking to parents about their child, in particular if it is a sensitive issue to be discussed.

Top Tips for effective listening

- Focus on what the parent/carer is saying (speech, body language and other nonverbal cues)
- Avoid interrupting or making it personal to you. Allow the person to express fully what they want to say
- Reflect back so that the person knows you have listened and provide a brief summary of what you have heard
- Avoid judgements.

Barriers to communicating with parents/carers

Communication and conversations can be complex and difficult sometimes and sometimes there may be an underlying issue that we do not know about:

- Parents may have had a poor Early Years' experience themselves
- Their children may not want them to come inside the setting, for this reason it may be assumed that parents only get involved when there is a problem
- They can't speak to the person they feel comfortable with
- They can't physically get to the setting

These are just a few of barriers that practitioners and parents may face and which impact on the ability to communicate.

What can you do to improve communication?

It is helpful to review and reflect on what is already in place and then to decide if something needs to be changed or new ways of working introduced. You need to identify what forms of communication are working well and then establish what can be changed according to priorities in the setting.

For example:

- parents engaging in children's learning
- parents as volunteers
- ensuring communication methods are inclusive and accessible for all children and families

Transition from home to the Early Years provider/school

We use the term 'transition' to refer to when a child moving from home to an Early Years provider/school.

However, for many children, and for many reasons, transition is not straightforward and is often affected by personal matters, misconceptions or poorly organised transition practice.

Parental Engagement and the impact it has on children's Attendance

Failure to implement a successful transition strategy will not only risk being costly for the child and family, but also for the setting as well. You will need:

- Knowledge and understanding of the transition issues.
- Early identification and intervention.
- Policy and procedures in place to support planning and activity (including induction).
- Family support and parent involvement.
- Inclusion of the children involved and partnership with other agencies.
- Monitoring, evaluation and detailed handover to new provision.

For further information and guidance see the [Early Years transition pack](#).

Parents as partners

By developing effective partnerships with parents in order to enhance the learning and development of the children with whom they work, the outcomes for children are significant, even accounting for factors such as poverty and disadvantage.

[The Early Years Foundation Stage](#) promotes effective working with Parents:

- **partnership working** between practitioners and with parents and/or carers
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- The key person must seek to engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.
- Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support.
- Parents and/or carers should be kept up to date with their child's progress and development.
- working in partnership with parents and/or carers, to promote the learning and development of all children in their care, and to ensure they are ready for school (for further information about school readiness look at The School Readiness booklet for practitioners and parents)

The key to the engagement of parents as partners is the ability of staff building trusting relationships with parents based upon mutual respect and by providing strategies and levels upon which parents can become involved in the setting and their child's development.

Ways to encourage parents to network

- Ensure that parents' email addresses are shared with fellow parents enabling speedy contact (if they have agreed to do this)
- Consider the use of Facebook as a medium of communication and networking among parents. Ensure you have a Social Media Policy
- Organise regular gatherings that take the form of a support group.

Parental Engagement and the impact it has on children's Attendance

- Initiate activities at which working parents, or parents who live far away from the setting, can attend and be part of the discussions
- Form action teams as a positive step towards active parental engagement.
- Involve parents as committee members/governors

Key principles and values that underpin effective engagement with parents.

Parents respond well to confident, well-informed practitioners, and need to feel that:

- They are not being judged or compared to others
- What they already do with their child is valued
- Their views are listened to
- They are treated as individuals, with unique circumstances
- Their knowledge of their child is respected and valued
- They know most about their own lives and the lives of their children

Useful information found on the [Early Years toolkit](#):

- Why good attendance is important
- School Readiness for practitioners and parents
- Transitions in the Early Years
- Personal care policy

Other useful webpages

- [Early Years Pupil Premium guidance](#)
- [Pupil Premium guidance](#)
- <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/early-education-toolkit>
- ['What to expect, when? A parents' guide](#)
- <https://oxfordshirecpdonline.com/cpd/default.asp>
- School Readiness Webpages for [parents](#) and [practitioners](#)
- [Health and development two-year-old reviews webpage](#)
- [Early Years transition pack.](#)