

# Parental Engagement



15<sup>th</sup> May 2017

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**EAL Conference – The MAC**

# Defining Mat

**Write a definition**

**Draw an image / symbol**

**Parental  
Engagement**

**Keywords to success**

**What it looks like in my setting (words,  
image and/or symbol)**

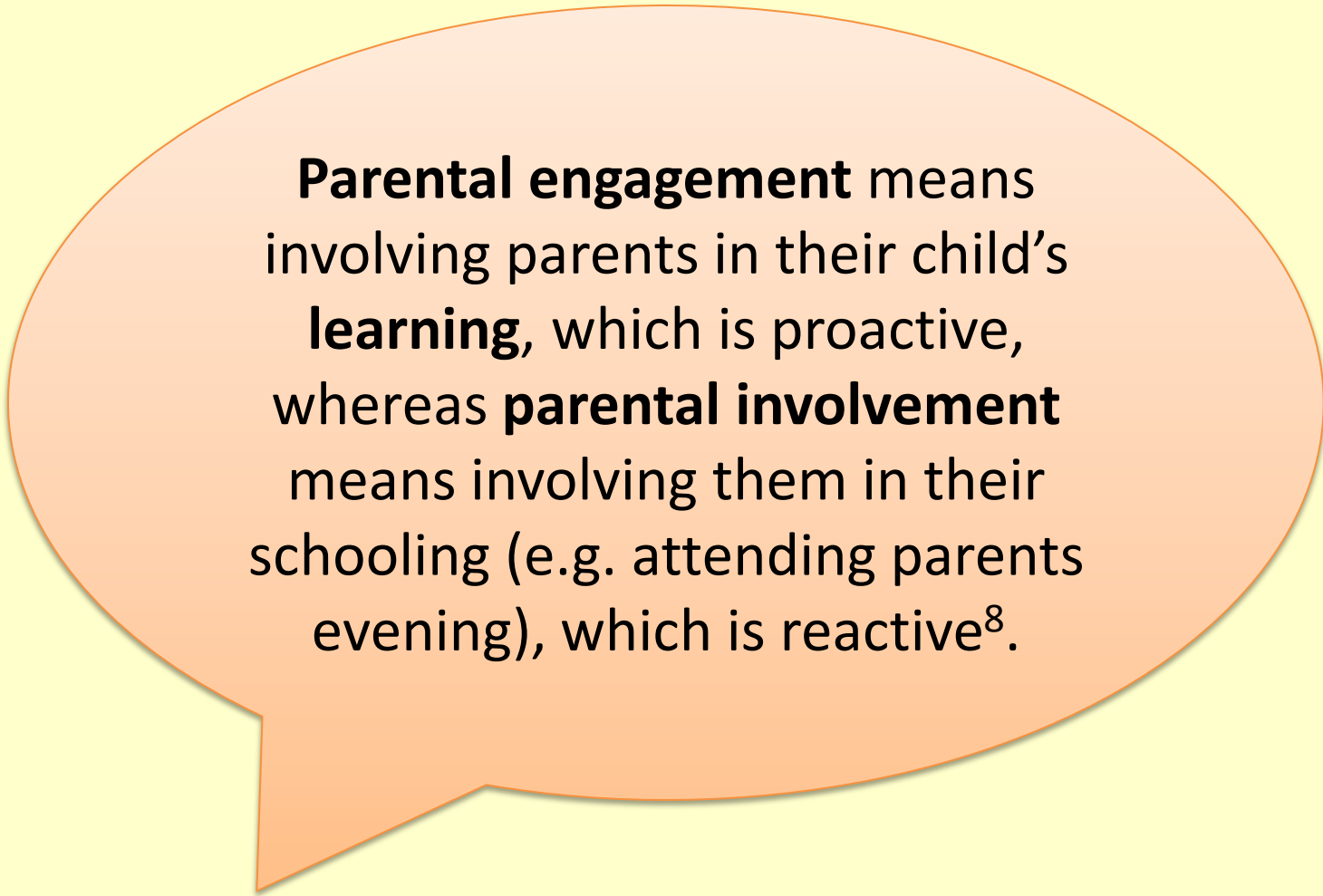
# Overview of our session

- ✓ Consider what the research advocates
- ✓ Share strategies and ideas to promote parental engagement
- ✓ Share case studies of current practice in Birmingham
- ✓ Reflection: Audit of your own setting and beginning action planning



# Parental Engagement v Parental Involvement

Consider your setting...



**Parental engagement** means involving parents in their child's **learning**, which is proactive, whereas **parental involvement** means involving them in their schooling (e.g. attending parents evening), which is reactive<sup>8</sup>.

# Parental Engagement v Parental Involvement

**Alternatively, schools who are effective at engaging parents use broad definitions of parental engagement and involvement.**

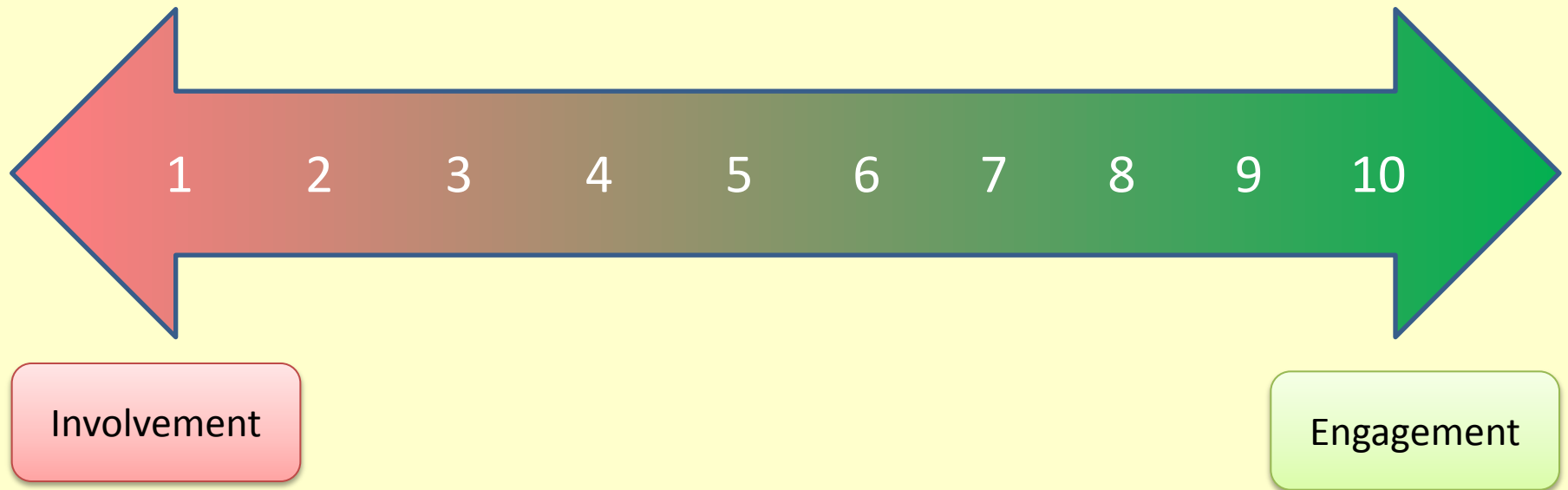
**This includes:**

- Learning at home: supporting homework, developing skills, promoting positive attitudes, values and behaviour
- Communication: two way (home – school and school – home)
- In-school involvement: volunteering, organising, supporting and attending events/activities
- Decision Making: members of the PTA, members of the governing body, other committees and advisory groups
- Collaborating with the local community

Adapted from Goodall et al (2011)

# Reflection:

Rate your school on the 'engagement versus involvement' scale:



Are you currently better at involving or engaging your parents?

# What the research says...

- The education research community accepts as ‘axiomatic’ that parent engagement is **crucial** in support children’s learning.<sup>1</sup>
- Schools that **improve** and **sustain** improvement engage the community; work actively to embrace racial, religious, ethnic and language differences; and build **strong links** with parents.<sup>2</sup>
- But...the success of parental involvement depends largely on the willingness of schools to **partner** with parents.<sup>1</sup>

# Research continued...

- A key factor in ensuring that parents and schools could work together was understanding each other's **role** and that there was a shared understanding and communication of this.<sup>3</sup>
- Education Endowment Foundation findings:



# Barriers to engagement

- Work commitments (many parents find themselves having to do more than one job<sup>11</sup>).
- Lack of fluency in English.
- Lack of knowledge about the educational system and their own previous school experiences.
- In many countries, parental involvement is neither expected nor wanted.
- In some countries, parents are expected to send their child to school, provide uniform etc.; the school 'do the rest'.
- Cultural miscues from lack of understanding of cultural differences (i.e. appropriate eye contact).
- Possible cost, time, transportation and childcare issues.

# Understanding Education around the World

There is an average of 130 students in each classroom (**Malawi**).

We have parents day where we can observe our children in class once or twice a term (**Japan**).

Children have no legal right to a free education and compulsory education only runs between the ages of five and nine (**Pakistan**).

Meal-time is considered part of the curriculum and kids are expected to learn not only about different foods and where they come from (schools try to source locally), but also to display good manners and etiquette. (**France**).



If the student doesn't pass their exams they stay in the same class (**Poland**).

Two education systems exist in parallel. Religious education is the responsibility of clerics at mosques, while the government provides free academic education at state schools. The average adult has spent less than 2 years in school (**Afghanistan**).

Some children, particularly girls, learn self-defence at school with some schools also incorporating awareness classes for boys about the need to respect women (**India**).

This country is where some of the most brilliant young brains in the world are born. Here the rate of gifted children is twice the average worldwide (**Romania**).

Parents and carers, particularly of those who have recently arrived, need opportunities in order to become **familiar** with the **education system** in their child's school to **enable** them to support their child's progress<sup>10</sup>.

# To promote community cohesion

EAL students' parents need to be given the opportunity and support to play an **active role in the education** of their children. This requires effort on the part of the school to help them **integrate** into the school community<sup>12</sup>.

“It is unlikely that there is a single strategy that is likely to be effective in developing good parental involvement in all schools...no doubt some judicious **mixture of strategies** will be called for<sup>6</sup>.”

# Conduct a ‘needs analysis’

- What: research indicates that **effective** parental engagement is planned for, embedded in the whole school and informed by a comprehensive needs analysis.<sup>2</sup>

“We are always very keen to give them what we think they need. One primary school I know that has successfully engaged parents has done so by providing what parents want first. This has included help with completing benefit applications, literacy support and advice on domestic violence, among others.”

# Conduct a 'needs analysis'

How (a 5 step approach):

1) Set your **goal** – what do you want to achieve? i.e. to better engage Roma parents or engage fathers.



2) Decide what **data** you need to collect (i.e. types of support parents want; their barriers to lack of engagement).



3) Decide **how and when** you will collect your data\*: staff survey, questionnaire, parent group, community group, informal meet and greet.



4) **Collate and analyse** what you have found out – what do they want, when do they want it and how will they access it



5) **Prioritise your next steps** – what are your first 3 strategies to implement.

\*Best practice suggests you should aim for at least 3 different consultation methods<sup>7</sup>.

# Welcome parents & families

- **What:** Create an ethos within school that welcomes children and parents from all backgrounds.
- **Why:** Hard-to-reach parents have a desire to know what is happening in their child's school<sup>8</sup>. If parents feel unwelcomed and intimidated from the beginning 'future efforts to involve may be futile<sup>11</sup>'.
- **How:**
  - Provide a pleasant and welcoming reception area that celebrates diversity of school community (including bilingual signage).
  - Staff are available (particularly leadership) at the start and end of each day to meet and greet parents.





# Welcome parents & families

- Provide induction courses into school and understanding British Education System for all family members; include a tour of the school.
- Creating a 'buddy' system where new parents are supported by existing parents.
- Organise open afternoons so parents can see the school 'at work and play' to demystify what is happening in your school.
- Consider becoming a 'School of Sanctuary.'



# Consider Communication

EAL Nexus found, “much of what was provided for parents by schools was **beyond the competence** of those with Entry Level English<sup>1</sup>.”

**Reflection and discussion:**  
consider your school's publications: how accessible are they for non-English speakers?  
Who checks this?

# Consider Communication

## How:

- Develop a **clear structure** (e.g. flow chart) that shows school communication structures regarding EAL which can be disseminated to teachers, EAL pupils, EAL children's parents and senior management.
- Find out **how (needs analysis?)** parents would like to receive information and where they can access it (i.e. text messages, Twitter, paper copies, blogs).
- Consider ways in which **positive and negative** messages can be communicate to parents. (i.e. templates of basic positive and negative statements translated for staff members).
- **Recruit** parents to support with writing and creating key information for other parents.

# Consider Communication

- All publications in plain, **jargon free English**, with relevant and appropriate images to support meaning (i.e. a picture of a student wearing correct uniform or images of correct PE kit).
- When possible and appropriate, **translate** publications.
- Have a mechanism in school for **checking** your publications are 'EAL parent friendly'.
- Ensure your materials, images and languages are **reflective** of the community and parents you serve.
- Promote examples of successful engagement as '**good news** stories'.
- Be **creative** when giving reminders: postcards, text messages, 'buddy' reminders.

# Train Your staff

**What:** improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the countries of their students/parents and best to work with EAL parents.

**Why:** Teachers can lack confidence and knowledge to engage effectively with their parents (this is found to be key if parent backgrounds are very different to those of the staff<sup>2</sup>).

Only SLT, MLT and EAL specialist staff had more knowledge about the parents of EAL students and the home environment<sup>12</sup>.

- **How:** Provide training on how to speak/write **key phrases/words**. Create a template 'phrase sheet' for all staff.
- Develop **staff understanding** of the geographical, social, educational backgrounds relevant to the school community. Ask willing parents to share with staff information about their heritage, beliefs and languages.
- Ask students to **share their experiences** of school and to bring in resources from their previous school.
- Ensure staff understand the importance of **development of first language** and how parents can support this (i.e. reading stories in their first language, watching TV in their home language).

# Train Your Staff

- Provide updated **community information** on the school website that can be accessed by school staff, EAL and non-EAL pupils and their parents.
- Provide training for staff on **signposting** parents to access additional support (i.e. the support provided by local Children Centres).
- Consider having **Parental Engagement Champions** who can coach other staff and raise awareness of strategies being implemented.



# Increase understanding of the curriculum

**What:** increase parents understanding of what their child is being taught/planned to be taught.

**Why:** increase the confidence of parents so that they can better understand and support their child. Demystify the curriculum so it is transparent to parents what is happening in the classroom.

**How:** Publish jargon-free glossary of key terms.

Share using displays/noticeboards/newsletters or online curriculum/topic information

Show how EAL materials can be used to support their child.

Hold workshops/open days to share what their child is learning.

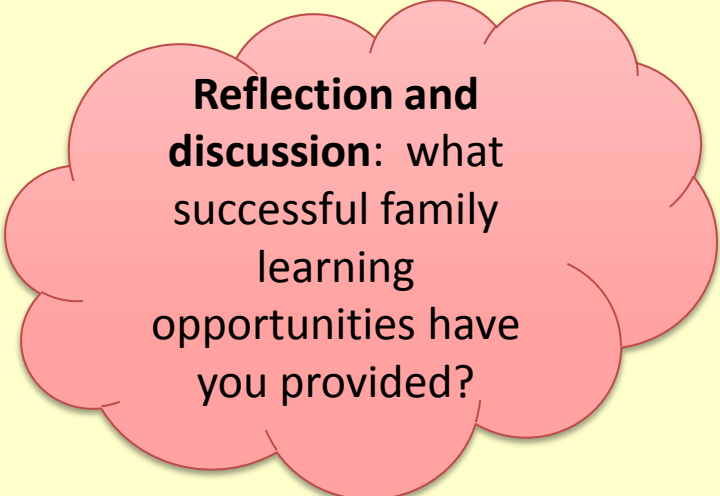


**Why:** Family learning programmes have a **considerable impact** on the achievements of both children and adults<sup>4</sup>.

- The impact of family literacy, language and numeracy on children's learning is robust and extensive<sup>2</sup>.
- Parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of young people through **supporting their learning in the home** rather than supporting activities in the school.
- It is parental support of learning within the home environment that makes the **maximum difference** to achievement<sup>9</sup>.
- Finally, opportunities for **non-EAL and EAL** parents and children to work together improve relations between community members and reduces stereotyping and conflict.

## How:

- After-school clubs focussing on one specific area such as reading, writing, barrier games.
- Informal sessions (i.e. art and craft, circuit training)
- Parent-child homework sessions
- Fathers' storytelling weeks
- Stay and Play



**Reflection and discussion:** what successful family learning opportunities have you provided?

# Family Learning: Choices



- Family Learning at **Birmingham Adult Education Service** work in partnership with schools, children centres, libraries and a variety of other venues.
- Includes information and advice on how they can go further with their own learning and receive support for any maths and English needs.
- Courses are funded and resourced through the Skills Funding Agency, so the good news is that the classes are **FREE** to all family members.
- This includes all resources and equipment. School's provide the venue (i.e. your setting), help publicise the programmes (newsletter, text to parents), recruit and support the families.

# Provide English workshops/learning

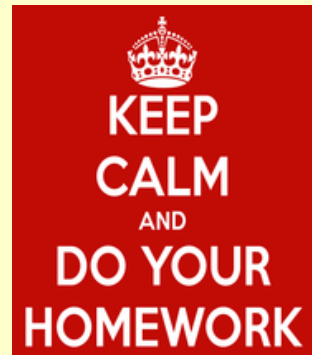
**What:** ESOL /basic English classes

**Why:** 70% of EAL parents surveyed<sup>1</sup> said they would welcome opportunity to study and **improve their own** English language skills with many feeling that they were '**out of their depth**' as their child moved through school.

**How:** making ESOL classes available for EAL students' parents helps to **improve parents' language development** and **social integration** and can potentially lead to more effective support strategies with regard to their children's learning and achievement.

# Homework Support

- **What:** provide opportunities for parents to learn **how best** they can support with homework.
- **Why:** research indicates parents both want and need guidance from school with respect to homework supervision<sup>1</sup>. “They (parents) asked should they correct any mistakes or tell the teacher if they see where their child went wrong.”
- Interventions for parents that focused on targeting improving children’s reading can be significantly beneficial.



## How:

- **Homework policy** that clearly sets out how parents can/should specifically help their child with homework.
- Provide a homework **overview/workshops** in advance of topics so parents are aware of forthcoming projects and tasks.
- Provide **training** for parents on teaching specific reading skills at home (twice effective as encouraging parents to listen to their child read<sup>2</sup>), writing skills and how maths calculations are taught

# Parents as a resource

**What:** Making use of parental **expertise and skills** to promote engagement with other parents.

**Why:** “True parent partnership involves harnessing and utilising the potential and strengths that **parents can bring** to the school<sup>8</sup>.”

“The impact of learning mentors ‘speaking the same language’ as local communities has been a defining feature of our schools in the last 20 years. Of course, in the last five years this ability to ‘speak the language’ has come to mean more than relating easily to white British working-class parents; it means literally being able to speak Polish, Slovakian and many other tongues<sup>5</sup>.”

## How:

- Conduct a '**skills and expertise**' audit of your parents to determine what they might offer the school.
- Use your **bilingual speakers** to lead and/or support sessions in community languages, or to translate.
- Set up a **buddy system** where newly arrived parents are 'inducted' into school by other parents to: understand school procedures and the British Education system.
- Maintain a **database** of parents willing to participate in research or engagement opportunities.
- **Utilise** parents to support with staff training (i.e. creating a template phrase sheet).



# Case Study: Oasis Foundry

## School Demographic:

- 69% mobility
- Private landlords (3 month contracts)
- No reliable internet access
- Over 40 languages spoken
- Located on James Turner Street (Benefits Street)
- Parents were not engaging (lack of trust)
- Average time pupil stays: 0.8 years (2014) 1.8 years (now)

# First steps...

They conducted '**needs analysis**' to really listen to what parents needed and then responded to their findings.

They wanted to: **empower** their parents (with; not to) and to build trusting relationships.

Other issues this raised: attitudes towards attendance and lack of internet access.



## Key drivers for their change:

1. **Visible** and available leadership (before/after school)
2. Teaching and support staff **available** (to build relationships)
3. Employing a community support worker
4. **Sharing positives** with parents (not always negatives)
5. Being **reliable** - not letting the parents down
6. They also became a '**School of Sanctuary**'

## The Hub

- ✓ Community and parent 'hub' attached to school building
- ✓ Employed a community worker: empowers parents but also to support with housing, benefit applications and signposting to support services
- ✓ Community meals
- ✓ Enterprise: 'Flavours of Winson Green'
- ✓ Animal Therapy and 'Animal Encounters'

Parents are now empowered to think up and implement their own ideas:

- Dads and Lads football group (supported by West Bromwich Albion)
- Sausage Sizzle
- Summer Fayre
- Community Litter Pick
- Mental Health support group called 'Grow'
- Trial of 'Fair Share': co-operative food sharing (small contribution for surplus food)
- Run Breakfast and Lunchtime clubs

# What Ofsted reported ...

Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school. All the parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about the improvements that they have seen during the time that the school has been open. They recognise and greatly appreciate the work of the principal and commented upon how approachable she is and how she knows the pupils as individuals.

The recently established community hub provides support and advice to parents on a range of issues and has strong and robust links with outside



# Case Study: Sladefield Infants School

## Demographic:

- Predominantly EAL (97%): Mostly Muslim but some Roma and Romanian children.
- Many parents who have engaged in parental support have moved into area and have no local family links.
- Approx. 50 families currently engaged with the school; many of these are accessing support for dealing with behaviour at home.



# The Role of their Learning Mentor

Organises and co-ordinates parental engagement activities. This includes:

- Using her Triple P and Positive Happy Parenting (PHP) training to: support parents with dealing with behaviour: getting up for school, bedtime, anger and emotional concerns.
- Works alongside school nurse: eating, bed wetting.

She also:

- Finds out what the parents want through meeting and greeting at the school gate, discussion and attendance at parent's evenings. Following each event, she evaluates the workshop to determine impact, areas for development and what other support parents would like.
- Utilises her parents to recruit new parents.



# Parent Engagement Workshops

## **To support learning and achievement:**

- ✓ Supporting your child with homework
- ✓ Learning through stories (which included a family visit to Ward End library)
- ✓ Family learning – using books/stories
- ✓ Number games and understanding how maths is taught at school
- ✓ PE – how it is taught at school
- ✓ Supporting with developing reading and writing skills

## **To support health and well-being:**

- ✓ Healthy eating (i.e. salt and sugar intakes)
- ✓ Star charts and rewards for positive behaviour
- ✓ Common child illnesses: signs and symptoms
- ✓ Head lice
- ✓ Road Safety (which has led to the parents creating a banner for the front of the school)

## **To support parents:**

- ✓ British Cultural values
- ✓ Looking for employment and CV writing (job advert noticeboard at school)
- ✓ Tackling challenging behaviour

## **To promote engagement:**

- ✓ Card making at Christmas
- ✓ Salsa dancing
- ✓ Art and craft
- ✓ Children-in-Need coffee morning
- ✓

# How they involve outside agencies

- Women's Aid: ran workshop on how they support parents with domestic violence
- Roots and Branches: promote community cohesion and took parents to visit different places of worship place (i.e. a church)
- The Police: covered domestic violence, drugs and anti-social behaviour
- Children's Centre Outreach: met with parents to explain what the Children's Centre can offer
- Dolphin Centre (Ward End Park): signposted parents to courses that they offer (i.e. ESOL, sewing)
- Live Education: ran a course on positive relationships and behaviour management strategies
- Adult Education: ran course on Cultural Diversity
- A2E: ran workshop on supporting pre-reading/pre-writing (PSS)
- And...they advertise community events, which promotes community cohesion.

# What Ofsted reported ...

Excellent links with parents, local schools and the diverse community groups in the locality and those from other countries show that the school strives to provide pupils with excellent opportunities to learn from and relate to people beyond the school.



# PSS Parent Ambassador Scheme

- ✓ Jointly delivered by PSS and Adult Education
- ✓ Begins Autumn 2017
- ✓ Parents gain an Open College Network accreditation

## **Parent Ambassador commitment:**

- Attend 10-12 sessions
- Complete homework and gap activities
- Volunteer in school

## **School commitment:**

- Recruit/find their PA
- Provide a mentor
- Provide a volunteer role
- Offer some form of employment at the end

# Monitoring the impact

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of parental engagement, the following data could be used to measure impact:

## **Student focussed:**

- Attainment/academic outcomes
- Behavioural outcomes/exclusions
- Attendance and punctuality

## **Parent focussed:**

- Demographic profile
- Attendance
- Attitudes to education
- Parent evaluations (Parent View)

# Audit your own setting

Pupil and School Support

## Parental Engagement

Audit Tool

This audit tool is designed to provide opportunity to reflect on your current 'parental engagement' practice and to begin action planning your initial areas of development.

Partners on the pathway to a positive future for children and young people



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