



Key Driver 1: Leadership, Ethos & Resources Formulating a Parental Engagement Policy

The objective was to formulate a parental engagement policy with clear procedures, including being able to communicate with hard to reach families as a result of the strategies identified, and therefore impact on the academic outcomes of the children.

Aims

- Identify a parent engagement governor to work with the school, parents and Parentkind
- Create clear strategies in a parent engagement policy and show how they'll be relevant for all families

Before working with Parentkind

The school had always felt that its links with parents and carers was strong, as evidenced by end of year surveys and attendance at parents' evenings and key events.

However, the school's attendance figure was disappointingly low for 2018-2019 and the need to consider the reasons for this became paramount.

As Askern Littlemoor is an infant school, the role of parents in their children's attendance is pivotal. Working effectively with families, particularly those who are hard to reach and have children who are persistent absentees, was felt to be a vital 'next step' for the school. Being involved in the Parentkind project gave the school a clear focus on parental engagement and how this could raise children's attendance and their academic outcomes.

What happened?

A parent engagement governor was identified who worked with the Executive Head to write a new policy and create an action plan for parental engagement.

Quick wins were identified to improve contact with parents:

- Congratulatory texts sent to all parents in a class
- Class teachers contacted individual parents to celebrate a child's particular achievement

The Spring Term action plan was formulated, the policy was drafted and some elements were achieved. It was then that the first lockdown of the coronavirus pandemic occurred.

How lockdown shaped our policy:

- Contact with parents has been essential during this period and families have been spoken to by class teachers weekly to offer support with learning and the families' wellbeing
- Parents' opinions have been sought on the type of learning which

is proving most accessible and engaging for the children. All parents were phoned to discuss their views about the children possibly returning to school. Using the phone call approach, 100% feedback has been gained and the school have been able to respond to their feelings and wishes. (For example, home learning packs are now being produced weekly as this is the preferred way for our parents to receive their child's home learning. Parents have collected from school and home-deliveries have been made by staff to ensure that everyone has received a pack)

- The Education Endowment Foundation research on effective home-learning has also informed the policy. Its ensured that all written communications can be easily read and understood and the school's website aims to be a non-threatening digital space. Staff have signposted parents to the Home Learning part of the website during lockdown and have talked parents through how to access this. This area of the website will remain after lockdown
- Teacher videos to support home learning have also been produced and these have been really powerful, with the children really connecting with story-times, phonics and maths sessions when delivered by their own teachers. These will remain as a resource to support children and families when schools return to normal.
- Going forward, the school aims to offer to meet parents in the home if desired, rather than asking them to come into school for parents' evenings and other meetings. Virtual meetings will also be offered.

What was the result?

- The project had clear direction with the involvement of the parent governor
- Lockdown forced the school to reflect on the effectiveness of our working relationship with parents
- New opportunities have been identified for engaging with our parents
- The new policy has been ratified by governors and shared with staff

What difficulties have there been?

- The school's main form of communication has been text messaging and the website. The need has now been identified to communicate with parents via email going forward. Many families do not access the school website regularly and do not have the technology at home to support home learning
- It's important to address the specific needs of our own community when creating policies and procedures linked to parental engagement, and especially home learning

Lessons learnt – Recommendations for other schools:

- An achievable action plan was created and they were selective in how they would proceed initially
- Decided not to introduce a Parent Council yet- school was not ready for this. They wanted to embed a clear parental engagement strategy, understood by all staff and parents, which was achievable and consistent throughout school
- Link governor has been key to ensure there was both support and challenge for the project and both face to face and virtual meetings have been held



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