Parentkind

Bringing together home & school

Parent Participation Framework Report for Parentkind

February 2019

Joanna Apps, Sarah Christie, Ruth Rogers, Zulfi Ali and Charmian Cowie

Research Centre for Children, Families and Communities
Canterbury Christ Church University
Canterbury CT1 1QU
Email: joanna.apps@canterbury.ac.uk

Canterbury Christ Church University

Research Centre for Children, Families and Communities

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Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all organisations and individuals in the field of parental participation and school-home relationships who provided advice and literature for this project.

We would also like to thank Parentkind staff Kirsty Yates and Ruth Lowe for working with us and supporting the development of this document.

1. Background

Parentkind (formerly PTA-UK) was established to:

advance education by encouraging the fullest cooperation between home and school, education authorities, central government and all other interested parties and bodies.

Through the provision of information, training, support, and as the membership body for Parent-Teacher Associations across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Parentkind supports and promotes parents' participation and voice in education.

In recognition of the current diversity of approach and lack of clear guidelines around parental engagement in schools, particularly in England, Parentkind aims to develop a framework that will have the potential to inform policy, support practice and champion parental engagement in education.

The purpose of the framework will be to facilitate:

- Development of strategies and resources by school leaders and teachers to achieve positive change
- Framing of education policy discourse on parent participation
- Framing of existing research and to highlight gaps of knowledge, stimulating development of new evidence.
- Development of strategies and resources for parents.

Previous work undertaken to explore the background for a possible framework has included:

- Desk research/a literature review indicating the policy drivers for parent participation (2016)
- Desk research on 'Hallmarks' of a parent friendly school which showed initial evidence to support individual 'pillars' of the framework (2017)

The five key 'pillars' of practice were identified as:

Pillar 1: Leadership, Ethos and Resources

Pillar 2: Effective Two-Way Communication

Pillar 3: Supporting Learning at Home

Pillar 4: Parent involvement in School Life

Pillar 5: Community Engagement

In the Autumn of 2018 the Research Centre for Children and Families (RCFCFC) at Canterbury Christ Church University was commissioned to undertake research to help further shape the development of Parentkind's Parent Participation Framework. The aim was to evaluate the research linked to the framework in its current form, highlight the key gaps and missing research evidence related to the five pillars and, where possible, add examples of contemporary practice that could help schools plan their work and suggest potential impact measures or other ways they might assess and monitor this. This report details this work, which will serve as a starting point for further consultation and development, in collaboration with stakeholders, to move the framework forward.

2. The Case for A Parental Participation Framework

After decades of research, it can now be said with reasonable certainty that having parents who actively show interest in, and support for, their children's learning and education is associated with better educational outcomes, even when socio-economic and other background factors are taken into consideration (e.g. Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Jeynes, 2012, Feinstein & Symons, 1999; Sammons et al, 2007).

Because of the relative strength of the evidence in this area, and because it seems to offer a more immediate opportunity for change than many other influences on educational inequalities, policy makers, researchers and schools have directed efforts at finding ways to influence parents to increase their engagement and involvement with their children's learning.

On the back of supportive evidence for the importance of parental participation, schools and other stakeholders have increasingly focused on working with parents as a potential route to narrowing the educational gap. Parents in the longitudinal studies on which the evidence is based are 'naturally' active participants in, and advocates for, their children's learning. The task for schools is, therefore, both to continue to be part of what fosters and extends such parental participation in those parents; and to find effective ways to play a part in supporting other parents to become more active participants in their children's learning and education.

However, this area remains complex for policy makers and schools to address effectively for a number of reasons. Firstly, the language and concepts in this area are often poorly defined and used in different ways to mean different things. This is more than just semantics. Before we can begin to talk about work with parents we need to have a consensus on terms and what exactly we are talking about when we use them, given that we are often talking about a large number of different behaviours, attitudes and activities.

Parental interest in children's learning and education and related supportive behaviours are variously referred to in research and policy as *parental involvement* in education (with a tendency to be applied more to parental relationships with-and behaviour occurring in- the school), and *parental engagement* (with a tendency to be applied more to general support for a child's learning and particularly behaviour and activities occurring in the home and in and concerned with the school).

One well known classification of parental behaviours related to better educational outcomes (Epstein, 2001) considers six types of behaviours - which schools can support - to fall under the term 'parental involvement':

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering at school
- Learning at home
- Decision-making in the school
- Collaborating with the community

School support for 'parental engagement' on the other hand has been described as:

> "approaches which aim to develop parental skills such as literacy or IT skills; approaches which encourage parents to support their children with, for example, reading or homework; the involvement of parents in school learning activities; and more intensive programmes for families in crisis." (The Education Endowment Foundation, 2018)

A number of shifts in thinking have occurred on terminology and conceptualisation of this area over time. For example, it has been suggested that the term "school, family and community partnership" may better reflect the ways schools and parents jointly take work to support children's learning than terms such as parental involvement (Epstein and Sheldon 2006).

For others an alternative way of thinking about parental involvement and parental engagement is to consider them as two ends of a three point continuum which runs from parental involvement with the school to parental involvement with schooling to parental engagement with learning (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). These authors highlight the importance of engagement in children's learning as going beyond parental involvement with the school or schooling in general in that it includes not just taking part in activities in the home or school that support learning but a feeling of 'ownership' and 'commitment' about this and children's learning in the broadest sense.

Parental involvement under Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) continuum, while still valuable, mainly concerns situations where the school is:

> "in control of the relationships and the flow of information; information is given to parents but not sought from them. Parents may be involved in activities, but those activities are instigated and controlled by the school. For the most part, these activities will take place in and around the school."(p.402)

The second point on the continuum is termed 'parental involvement with schooling' and is seen as activities that:

> "can take place either in school or in the home, and is characterised by an interchange of information between parents and school staff. The focus of this interaction is schooling – the processes which surround learning… At this point on the continuum, agency in relation to supporting children's learning is shared between parents and the school. This point also represents the furthest along the continuum that schools can direct; at this point, schools can still initiate and guide discussions and interventions, in conjunction with (not just "with the help of") parents." (p.404)

The third point on the continuum represents 'parental engagement' and while the hardest for schools to effect represents an ideal in terms of associations with positive educational outcomes. It is described as the point on the continuum where there is:

> "the greatest exercise of parental agency. Parents' actions may be informed by the school, or based on information provided by the school, but the choice of action and involvement remains with the parent…Parents at this point are engaged with the learning of their children not due to dictates from the school but because of their own perceptions of their role as parents" (p. 405).

It can be seen from these descriptions that shifts in the location for activities and the agency held respectively by parents and schools appear to be key to movement from involvement to engagement. It is suggested that such a continuum may be useful as a basic rubric for assessing and distinguishing schools' work in this area. However, the authors note that not all parents or all activities can 'progress' down this continuum.

Taking ideas about terminology a step further, in the development of Parentkind's framework the term *parental participation* is used to encompass activities related to both parental involvement and engagement as they are used in the literature and policy to focus on the participatory and partnership nature of positive relationships between parents and schools. In line with this, parental participation is the term used throughout this report- except where the

research that is cited explicitly focuses on one or other term or it is clearer to use one of these terms.

Another, challenge for schools in parental participation work is that while there are decades of research and potential practice examples to draw on, the robust evidence base around parental participation is still relatively limited and dispersed (Gorard, See, and Davies 2012; Huat See and Gorard, 2015). Additionally, this area also lacks a strong theoretical basis (Goodall, 2018), which means it is not always easy to identify the mechanisms and levers that might (or might not) be important and transfer these from one setting to another to learn from successful work. It also means that when a particular practice or programme 'doesn't work' we are not always able to identify where in the complex chain from school to parent to child it was not effective. Together, these issues can make it difficult for policy makers to draw overarching conclusions on what needs to be included in guidance and for schools to focus on what constitutes promising practice. In light of this, one of the aims of the parent participation framework is to draw together practical insights from research in this field and to highlight gaps and valuable future research directions.

There are also more detailed aspects of work that require acknowledgement and attention. Encouragingly, the majority of parents report that they would like to be more involved and this finding is fairly consistent (e.g. Parentkind, 2016, 2018; Grant, 2011) but to support and build relationships with parents takes commitment, knowledge, skills, resources and time and the approaches taken need to fit a diverse range of needs at a time when teachers and schools are under increasing financial and resource strain. Better, more tailored choices for parental participation work is needed more than ever by schools working under such conditions. A one-size fits all approach to parental participation, for example, runs the risk of not being effective for those children who have most to gain (Posey-Maddox and Haley-Lock, 2016).

An acknowledgement of the inequalities amongst parents, not just children, is needed. Parents do not all come equally equipped and resourced to support children's education and individual and structural inequalities exist among different parent groups particularly ethnic minority parents (Crozier, 2010) and immigrant families that impact on relationships with their children's schools (Christie an Szorenyi, 2015). Neither do all parents always welcome closer contact and advice from schools for a whole host of reasons (National College, 2010; Prior, 2018). Teachers and other education staff, for their part, can see parental participation work as challenging (D'Haem and Griswold, 2017), lack confidence and training in working with parents (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2001), hold stereotyped views of 'uninvolved' parents (Hornby, 2000) or simply feel under too many other more immediate pressures to give time and consideration to parental participation (Ellis, 2017) Along with other issues and increasing financial, staffing and restructuring pressures on schools, this is the reality within which parental participation work needs to fit.

Despite - or because of - these challenges to parental participation, it is timely to properly celebrate and share the innovative and successful work schools and parents have done and continue to do together and to move this forward. That so much good work continues between schools and parents highlights the commitment and dedication of all those involved, the value attached to this work and, most fundamentally, the benefits to be gained. This work needs to be sustainable and effective and this can only happen through more investment, policy attention, quality research and guidance, stakeholder consultation, discussion and reflection. With this is mind, Parentkind's Parent Participation Framework seeks to start new conversations and debate about parental participation in the 21st century.

3. Study design and methodology

The study was a cross-disciplinary literature review focusing on research literature supplemented by reports and grey literature. Using the techniques of a rapid review the following databases were searched:

British Education Index
Child Development and Adolescent Studies
ERIC
Web of Science
Psychinfo
ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)
PsycARTICLES
PsycINFO
Social Policy and Practice
Web of Science (WoS)
Google Scholar

Figure 1: Databases searched

Database search terms used are shown in figure 2 below:

+	
Parent* Carer* Famil* Parental Home School-home Home-school Communit* Neighborhood* Neighbourhood*	Engagement Involvement Participation Support Education Learning School* Learning "Home learning" "Home-learning environment" "family learning"

Figure 2: Search Terms

Literature from 2000 onwards, published in English and focusing first on articles from peer reviewed journals and academic books was sought. Research relating to parents of children in both primary and secondary state schools was included. Priority was given to UK work and this was supplemented with other European, US, New Zealand and Australian research. Given the wide range of types of report and literature which touch on parental participation issues, detailed searches of unpublished, grey literature, websites and other documents were undertaken using online searches, and snowballing techniques where relevant references from each source were followed up. Internal databases such as the Parents in Education Research Network (PERN) which the authors have edited since 2011 were searched along with abstracts from relevant conferences such as the European Network About Parents in Education (ERNAPE).

Research evidence was evaluated and synthesized for each pillar. In each case, we assessed the strength of evidence of the effectiveness of a practice and where there was insufficient or missing research evidence for conclusions about to be drawn. Given the diverse nature of academic and practice-based research to cover on parental participation, a simple bespoke three level assessment of quality of *causal* evidence was used:

1. **Good evidence:** Meta-analyses, systematic reviews, randomised controlled trials and other controlled trials; experimental designs, longitudinal cohort studies using statistical modelling with controls.
2. **Moderate 'upstream' evidence:** Cross sectional studies using statistical modelling with controls, pre-post intervention designs without control or comparison group.
3. **Tentative/emerging evidence:** Case studies, interview-based or survey-based studies of teachers and parents (where being used to make causal predictions of 'what works'), focus groups.

Gaps in the literature were identified and suggested 'parent-side' measures that schools could use for assessing the success of their work were included for each of the pillars, along with a contemporary case study of practice taken from a UK school. The contemporary case studies of practice were chosen from the literature on promising practice and were selected to reflect a key aspect of evidence-based work highlighted for each pillar.

4. Pillar 1: Ethos, Environments, Leadership and Resources

Introduction

This pillar covers a range of overarching factors relating to the leadership and structures in place in schools. It includes school values and 'atmosphere' in the form of the concept of 'school ethos', the impact of physical surroundings and aspects of the school building and grounds, the approach and quality of senior leadership and the resources that schools have to draw upon in the form of staff, buildings and budget.

School ethos

School ethos has been described as a 'fashionable but nebulous' term (Donnelly, 2000 p.134). It can be thought of as either or both the stated aims and objectives of a school - which might seem reasonably measurable - or more qualitatively and informally, as something that results from the interactions, relationships and processes that occur in the school - which might or might not correspond with the stated aims and objectives (Donnelly, 2000). In terms of parental participation, it is likely that while any stated aims and objectives will underlie the more qualitative aspects and 'feel' of the school's ethos, it is this second, more qualitative aspect of ethos that is most important in encouraging parents to feel comfortable and welcome.

The impact of school ethos can be felt throughout the school community. Ethos is thought to not only drive educational outcomes but also pupil social and emotional wellbeing and behaviour. For example a report by the Scottish Government (2018) cites research from the Behaviour in Scottish School Research (BISSR) 2016 which found teachers' ratings of 'the overall school ethos' was the best predictor of the extent to which negative pupil behaviours were reported.

A positive ethos was described as a culture where pupils felt 'included, respected, safe and secure and where their achievements and contributions are valued and celebrated is essential to the development of good relationships'. It was also described as the sense of a school community. The report considered 'climate' and ethos as driving pupil and staff social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. Climate was described as a school's:

- core values
- attitudes

- beliefs
- school 'connectedness'
- a feeling of being accepted, respected and bonded to the school environment
- A feeling of safety

Ethos was felt to derive from strong senior leadership from the SMT and good communication.

In terms of school ethos and parents, taking every opportunity to connect with parents and make them feel welcome is highlighted in many parental participation frameworks. This is especially important as parents join and leave the school. Welcome meetings in the Summer term for new parents are a fairly common practice that is recommended and might be extended with taster sessions helping parents learn more about learning in the school along with provision of leaflets on the curriculum and how to support it at home (Welsh Government, 2016).

Welcoming parents is also an everyday activity and opportunities to build relationships with parents are not restricted to formal one-to-one meetings. Simple recognition and greeting of parents, ideally by name, can be vital to developing parents' trust as illustrated by these quotes from/about head teachers in Day et al's (2009) study of school leadership:

> "We know every child in this school. I'd never walk past a child and not speak to them because I think you're an individual, you've got your own dignity. Sometimes I see staff walking past parents. They don't say good morning. There's a parent there, if I walked past that parent I'd say good morning, I'd talk to the children, hello, you're individuals. You try to show by example, really." (Day et al, 2009, p. 106)

> "[of the head teacher]He walks round the school all the time, he'll go into lessons, he'll cover, he leads assembly, he goes in both staff rooms and he knows the children, he knows the parents, he's got an open door policy in terms of staff and parents, he's got a good relationship with the governors." (Day et al, 2009, p. 124)

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

"Middlesbrough Schools focused on their communities. In Middlesbrough, although operating as a cluster, the schools' sense of a shared vision is still developing. Each school and children's centre shares very similar values and practice and endeavours to be seen as the hub of the community with the aim of overcoming barriers to engagement felt by parents. Head teachers and governors have set a vision for each of their schools which involves them in modelling a culture of openness and respect with an open-door policy that all staff are encouraged to adopt. Although this has presented them with some challenges with regard to safeguarding, the schools feel strongly that the benefits outweigh the risks. In all the schools, parents are encouraged to approach any member of staff and each member of staff acts as appropriate depending on the issue. The faith ethos of one school was felt to have a bearing on positive parental perceptions of the school. Another school operates an open-site policy where the school gates are not locked and children use the premises in the evenings and at weekends. The school believes it is important for the premises to be as open as possible and be part of the back-yard of the community." (**National College, 2010**)

School environment

The physical spaces that schools occupy need to be perceived as welcoming environments by parents. Many different aspects of how a school feels and the ways parents are able to move around it may affect this. Not all of these aspects are under the control of schools themselves, since many are features of the buildings themselves which cannot be changed. However, attention to aspects of the school that might be possible to change could be helpful. For example, previous work on family support and parental engagement in extended schools, early years settings and children's centres has suggested that the ways that parents enter the building, physical barriers (e.g. a table where children pick up name cards as a form of register beyond which parents are implicitly or explicitly not allowed) and highly 'feminised' environments may influence parents' perceptions of settings (Apps, Ashby and Bauman, 2007; Hunt et al, 2010; Apps et al, 2007).

School leadership

The role of school leaders and senior staff is fundamentally to facilitate learning among staff and pupils (Youngs, 2007; Moos, 2010; Clarke and Wildy, 2011). School leaders can be seen to sit at the centre of a hub of relationships within children, school staff, parents, the local community and other stakeholders and partners (Moos, 2010). Parental participation, then, is naturally part of the leadership role given its impact on children's education and because of the networks and systems that school leaders wish to develop. Therefore, movement towards change in a school's parental partnership work comes down, ultimately, to school leaders driving this forward (Goodall, 2018).

Positive school ethos and culture are seen to derive from leadership and it is suggested that leadership needs to be both authoritative and distributive (Dinham, 2007). Basing his ideas about good school leadership on ideas about positive parenting (namely Baumrind, 1991), Dineham suggests authoritative leadership focuses on being highly responsive - in terms of warmth, sensitivity and support to staff, parents and children - but also highly demanding - in terms of high expectations and provision of structure. In being distributive, leadership is shared across staff and not solely led by the head teacher. While head teachers ultimately lead the work on parental engagement through broader leadership accountability, strategies and approaches, within schools direct responsibility may be with another senior member of staff or distributed to strategy managers and coordinators working across a school cluster (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011). There are also suggestions that while head teachers' attitudes towards parental participation are key, schools may benefit from having another senior leadership 'champion' for parental participation who can lead this role and coordinate a whole school approach.

Research suggests that school leadership is fundamental to developing parental participation work (e.g. Goodall, 2018, Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011, Goodall and Montgomery, 2013, Giles, 2006) and a large survey of UK parents identified visible and approachable head teachers as one of the main ways that parents thought schools could be 'parent friendly' and that 'an open door policy that encourages parents to meet teachers and/or head teachers' was seen as the best way to help represent parents' views within the school (PTA-UK, 2017).

Leadership may impact not only on parental participation but also on communities. For example, a UK study of leadership in an infant and junior school over a period of four years found that the principal was critical to the implementation and sustainability of parental involvement work and supporting social cohesion at a community level (Kington and Mleczko, 2013). Moreover, good leadership for parental participation is likely to be closely aligned to good leadership per se (BELMAS, 2018). There are, therefore, multiple good reasons to support and to promote the kinds of leadership that facilitate parental participation.

However, overall, it has been noted that there is a paucity of very specific and practice focused, robust and transferable research on school leadership and parental engagement (BELMAS group, https://www.belmas.org.uk/RIG-PE, 2018). This is identified as an area where more work is needed.

It is notable that the requirements for schools to support parental participation, while still relatively broad and mostly un-operationalised in policy, come under School Leadership and Management in Ofsted school inspections. However, outside a small number of key areas and activities, schools largely decide for themselves the nature of how to work with and support parents. The benefits of this are that since the communities that schools serve are all different, schools are the best able to understand the specific needs of their families and devise tailored support. The downside, however, is that this means this work is largely dependent on senior staff to drive it forward, that most work is bottom up, based more on what sounds helpful than what is known to be helpful and based on evidence (or at least promising practice) in terms of effectiveness. This is exacerbated by the lack of evaluation of individual school parent participation work, even where schools are doing large amounts of work with parents. For example, Ofsted (2011) found that more than 75 % of primary and secondary schools included parent participation work as part of their school improvement strategy but even schools that were rated good or outstanding at working with parents were not conducting regularly and rigorous evaluation of their work in this area.

It is suggested that local authorities might play a greater role in supporting school leadership and in particular school-community partnerships (Ofsted 2010 cited in Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011). This might include:

- providing leadership and establishing expectations
- co-ordinating coherent strategies across their area
- getting to know their constituent communities
- keeping this knowledge up to date
- identifying needs
- meeting those needs

They highlight challenges in sustainability, most importantly in retaining 'committed and inspiring' leaders and replicating these levels of commitment across school staff teams. In addition, they are mindful that schools may require access to funding for some areas of work with parents. Such issues are likely to need local and national solutions, but building community relationships (pillar 5) may offer one way for schools to access low or negligible cost support for parent participation activities that fit with both their and voluntary, charity and community organisations aims.

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

The Deputy Head Teacher of Richmond Park School in Carmarthen, Wales, Daniel Cooper, conceived and implemented a highly successful programme called "PEAS" (Parents Engaged Actively in School). Working in collaboration with the PTA, it was designed specifically to increase parental engagement. Daniel explains, "We wanted parents to be more of an integral part of the school, and we created a list of activities for ways of engaging them and breaking down the barriers between home and school." The aim was to work closely alongside parents to provide them with skills to prepare their children for school and life success. PEAS involved a range of activities, from academic subjects to workshops run by teachers. The school has involved external specialists including police officers and oral hygienists. A lot of activities are fun: e.g. a

staff versus parents' dodgeball competition as well as Indian Head Massages giving parents a chance to relax. There was a Family Friday every week which involved academic or non-academic activities. For example, one week the activity was making Father's Day cards. About forty parents participated, working with the children, painting each other's feet and hands.

Positive Impact
School attendance rose to 95.5%, and has progressively increased over the last few years. Children's reading ages have improved. The school used an approach called ERIC, which stands for Everyone Reading in Class. There is a teacher or teaching assistant on hand to help parents and give them advice on how to help their child with reading skills. Parents' attendance at Parents' Evenings went from 43% to 93% which the school attributes to building trust with parents who are now recommend the school more to other parents.

(**Parentkind, 2016**)

A number of broad areas are suggested for the approach to leadership that supports good partnership working with parents including:

- Outward facing leadership that starts 'where parents are' rather than where schools think they should be-whether this means 'going out' to the community (see pillar 5 for more detail on community engagement) or finding more informal ways for parents to come into the school, for example, the provision of a school-based café that parents can use during the day.
- Modelling behaviours that support effective relationships such as listening to and talking *with* parents (see pillar 2 for more on effective two-way communication).
- Supporting staff to work with parents - for example, through continuing professional development (CPD) and supervision - and monitoring and evaluating work with parents.
- Having a clear strategy around and commitment to working with families. This could involve embedding parental engagement work into strategic and operational planning in individual schools and local clusters.
- Starting with and prioritising support to those individual parents and families with highest need by going out into communities, listening to families, building relationships based on trust and integrity and understanding their needs.
- Enabling parents to contribute to the design of new services, programmes and support work

(National College for Learning in Schools and Children's Services, 2010)

In particular, when considering parents with previously lower rates of engagement with schools (previously referred to as 'hard to reach'), the following leadership approaches have been suggested:

- Communication training programmes where parents learn to communicate and work directly with their child
- Encouraging parents to see themselves as partners and consumers in the educational process
- Providing opportunities for parents to critique and formulate agendas
- Giving parents meaningful roles in school decision-making
- Emphasising how needed and valued parental involvement is
- Communicating that parental involvement and support makes a considerable difference to their child's performance

(Campbell, 2011)

Furthermore, taking a holistic view of how parental engagement fits in to family life and the parent-child relationship as a whole may be helpful and is suggested in some resources (for example, a very detailed toolkit from the Maryland Parental Engagement Coalition, 2018). It has also been suggested that schools need to consider the changing demographics of parents - particularly the rise of lone and/or working mothers and the impact of this on time to be involved in activities or support around their children's learning that is scheduled in school hours (Campbell, 2011).

In relation to the concept of parents as consumers, where schools may have previously considered parents more as consumers than partners, it will be important to try to expand this view and to consider them as both partners and stakeholders to whom schools are accountable. Schools are accountable directly to parents along with other stakeholders–including governors, local education authorities, Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Boards and Ofsted. This is represented in policy documents such as the white paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), for example:

> "Central to our approach is the need to make it easier for parents and the public to hold schools to account. In the past, too much information has been unavailable to parents, too difficult to find or not presented comprehensibly." (DfE, 2010: 66, cited in Campbell, 2011).

This is reflected in governance policies, such as the Governance Handbook, which states:

> As the strategic leaders of their organisations it is vital that boards are connected with, and answerable to, the communities they serve, particularly parents/carers. Boards should never become detached, distant or unanswerable to parents or carers. (Governance Handbook, 2017, section 2.4.14 p.16)

Accountability to parents may be seen in a variety of ways. Acquah (2013), in reviewing the history of ways in which UK schools are held accountable, considered seven types of accountability - professional, hierarchical, market, contractual, legal, network, participative. Schools were accountable to parents in terms of three of these - market accountability, based around parents' rights to clear information on school performance on which to base choices of schools, legal accountability, for example to provide for children with SEN in ways stipulated in local or national legislation, and participative accountability, around the requirement to support holistic child educational outcomes and community outcomes. Interestingly, as Acquah highlights, the last of these is associated with the least sanctions for schools if they fail to provide this.

Accountability matters to parents. Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey (2018) found that 66% of parents wanted schools to be more accountable to them. However, given that there is yet no legal requirement for schools in England and Wales to have a formal body to represent the views of parents, there can be an 'accountability gap between what parents want and what they experience' in these countries (Parentkind, Policy Position Paper, 2018). It can be particularly difficult for parents to have an input at local authority and MAT level. The reasons for the lack of parental participation at these levels are not fully explored in research and this would be another useful area for research to address.

Effective school leadership will need to accommodate these different relationships with parents- as stakeholders to whom the school is accountable, as partners in children's education and as participants in school life, policy and decision-making. To do this, parental input and decision making at all levels and accountability to parents will need to be transparent in in strategic, and actionable, documents such as school improvement plans; and be an overarching goal for senior staff working to develop parental participation.

School resources

School resources for parental participation work include teaching and non-teaching staff, buildings and budgets.

Staff are clearly the first and most important resource for parental participation work; and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are likely to be key to ensuring a good fit between staff skills conducive to improved parental participation. However, parental participation preparation is still rare in teacher training and CPD (National Parent Forum Scotland, 2017).

This is an important area to address. Teachers, especially the newly qualified, can feel anxious about working with parents and yet very little preparation and 'exposure' to parents is provided in their training. For example, a US study found teacher educators and student teachers valued partnerships with parents but both expressed concern about experiencing difficulties working with parents (D'Haem and Griswold, 2017).

Additionally, the same study suggested that student teachers may underemphasize the importance of diversity in working with families in partnership, focus on information giving rather than building reciprocal relationships and have a tendency to consider any problems encountered as lying with the parents. Suggested ways of countering these attitudes were field trips to and class discussion around culturally diverse settings, formative assignments and 'authentic experiences with opportunities to examine beliefs and attitudes toward families from diverse backgrounds'.

It is important to consider inclusion of this and other kinds of parental participation training aimed at not only providing skills and resources for this work but also encouraging teachers to be more adaptive in their perspectives on parental participation. An important and under-acknowledged factor is that teachers' and parents' views of each other are both dynamic and may have the power to create self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, teachers' attitudes to parental participation may impact on their perception of students. A large US cluster randomised trial study of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management course (Thompson et al, 2017) found that teachers who viewed individual parental involvement as low were more likely to view the children of those parents as having more externalizing behaviours, fewer social competencies, more attention deficit symptoms, and disruptive behaviours towards adults and peers.

While the training and support of teachers and senior leaders is essential, other staff should also be considered. A 'whole school' approach is advocated widely across parental participation practice and research (e.g. Ashton and Grayson, 2013; Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011; National Improvement Hub, 2018), meaning that work is embedded across all school activities, rather than 'bolted on' to activities, and with involvement of all staff. For example, school office and reception staff often have the first and most frequent contact with parents. They may live in, or be connected closely with, the local community and be known by parents outside the school. This may help them build trusted relationships with parents.

Finding ways to increase parental engagement work on low or negligible ring-fenced budgets for this might be considered challenging. However, research suggests that relationships are key and being approachable and welcoming-which in theory cost nothing- are central to this. For example, simple greetings and informal exchanges with parents are an important way to build relationships (e.g. Hunt et al, 2010; Education Scotland, 2016).

A different aspect of budget – which schools may not have considered from a parental participation perspective – is the value of consulting parents on budgets, especially those with a direct impact on families such as pricing of activities and services, for example, after school clubs. There is currently a potential for tension in school-home relationships, with many schools forced to make up shortfalls in funding through requests to parents for donations of different kinds, and needing to raise the costs of activities to make them sustainable. Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey (2018) found parents were rarely consulted by schools on aspects of budget but this was something that they would value being consulted on. While consultation of this kind is unlikely to alleviate the strains on finances, if a series of different financial options are available to schools, it might help support more 'parent friendly' choices amongst these and reduce any negative impacts on relationships with parents.

Suggested measures

The following measures are suggested as ways that success in this pillar might be assessed by schools:

- Parental survey or other data on school ethos and environment indicates parents feel welcome and supported - e.g. rating how welcome they feel parents are to participate in different aspects of school life - and parents suggest that this has helped them support their child's learning better.
- In order to reduce the burden on parents of lengthy questionnaires-which often have low response rates and may also exclude those with lower levels of literacy - some simple 'real-time' data collection could be valuable such as the kind collected on patient satisfaction with services in the NHS. For example, regularly on exiting the school parents could be invited to give feedback via pin boards/pressing a button display/posting a token/bead in slot or some other similar method.
- Parental survey (or other data/real time data as above) on the senior management team indicate that parents feel staff are visible, approachable and available and support their concerns around their child's learning.
- Parental survey (or other data/real time data as above) show high parental uptake of home learning support resources provided by the school (this could include 'unobtrusive' measures that do not require parents to provide information-such as metrics related to document downloads from a school website) and these are rated as useful for supporting home learning by parents

Summary of success in this pillar

Table 1, below, provides a summary of research and practice for this pillar. When this pillar of the framework is strong, schools develop and maintain a positive ethos that parents find welcoming and staff are accessible to support them. This ethos will both derive from and feed into school strategy and leadership. When this pillar is working well, parents understand their importance to children's learning and feel schools are supporting them in this; they also feel they-or other parents- can have input into decision-making at all levels. Staff in schools where pillar 1 work is successful will be supported through any or all of the following: CPD, mentoring, other more informal supports for work with parents, and this area will be evaluated and all staff will feel they have a role to play.

Table 1: Summary of Research and Practice for Pillar 1: Ethos, Environments, Leadership and Resources

Strength of evidence	• Mainly **emerging** evidence. • Leadership and ethos, and to a lesser extent environments, are cited as important to parental participation work in the literature, particularly in guidance documents. • Good leadership intuitively underpins most parental participation work.
Examples of suggested practice (what good practice could look like)	• Encouraging parents to see themselves as **partners and consumers in the educational process**. Emphasising how needed and valuable parental involvement is. • Prioritising support to those individual parents and families with **highest need.** • Providing **welcome meetings** where parents can familiarise themselves with the classroom and school. Providing **leaflets with information** on the school and curriculum. • **Giving parents meaningful roles** in school decision-making and enabling them to contribute to the design of new services, programmes and support work. Providing opportunities for parents to critique and formulate agendas. • Enabling **staff access to continuing professional development** (CPD) and supervision related to working with families. Retention of trained, committed parental participation- **involved staff at all levels**.
Key promising approaches and 'quick wins' for schools	• Having a **clear strategy** around and commitment to working with families. • **Modelling behaviours** that support effective relationships such as listening to and talking with parents. • **Supporting staff** to work with parents and **monitoring the impact** of this
Gaps in the research/research issues	• More **high quality, well-specified research** is needed on effective leadership practice to influence parental participation and in turn educational outcomes. • A UK survey (or other research) to **map staff training/training needs** in parental participation would be valuable • Research exploring the **anxieties, concerns and difficulties** perceived and experienced by teachers in working with parents and approaches to reduce this (e.g. teacher mentoring) is missing from the literature.
Suggested measures of success	• **Parental survey/interviews or other data (e.g. simple 'real-time' data collected regularly on exiting the school via pin boards/pressing button display/posting token/bead in slot)** on school ethos and environment **indicates parents feel welcome and supported**-e.g. rating how welcome they feel parents are to participate in different aspects of school life-and parents suggest that this has helped them support their child's learning better. • **Parental survey/interviews or other data** on the senior management team **indicate that parents feel staff are visible, approachable and available and support their concerns** around their child's learning. • **Parental survey or other data** show **parental uptake of home learning support resources** provided by the school (e.g. metrics related to document downloads from a school website) and these are **rated as useful** for supporting home learning by parents

5. Pillar 2: Effective Two-Way Communication

Introduction

This pillar covers all forms of face-to-face, verbal and written communication between schools and families. This can include parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), other school events where staff and parents have contact, newsletters, information sheets, websites, reports, phone calls and texts. Two way communication in these types of media relates to the extent to which such communication allows parents to respond and a genuine dialogue with teachers and schools to occur.

Good communication is at the heart of strong relationships, and effective two-way communication between schools and families - and schools and the community - can be seen as the bedrock of parental participation work.

It can be argued that this pillar in Parentkind's parental participation framework underlies all of the others; and is the likely pathway to all other aspects of parental participation, such as a welcoming environment, home learning, involvement in school life, and community engagement. It may also be a function of the quality of communication within the school itself and this can impact on good communication with parents (Stevens, 2018)

The importance of a 'shared landscape' between families and teachers (Pushor, 2012) and two-way communication which supports "mutual exchange of values and knowledge" and "reciprocity, empowerment, empathy, change and opportunities for both parents and the school" has been stressed (Arnot and Schneider, 2018). At the same time, difficulties for parents understanding the school and education system and navigating 'the inscrutable professional discourse' of schools are noted (Power and Clark, 2000, p.44).

The challenge for schools is to determine what good communication might actually look like in practice and the best ways to achieve this.

What is school-home communication?

Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). Communication skills are seen to underpin effectiveness at a personal and organisational level (Brun, 2010; Summers, 2010). School-home communication can be considered to include all forms of written and spoken information or exchanged designed to facilitate knowledge or action.

Current approaches to school-home communication

Schools currently employ a wide number of methods of communication with parents including face to face, individual and group-based contact of a short and long term nature (e.g. parenting and family learning programmes), emails, reports, newsletters, personal and single issue letters, websites and texts.

A key issue is the extent to which school-home communication can be said to be two-way and how regularly and in what detail parental preferences are considered. Two-way communication is required so that both teachers and parents can understand contextual factors in the learning environments of a child. In the case of teachers, knowledge of and sensitivity to family situation and characteristics are vital in building relationships and providing tailored support for the home learning environment (Reschly and Christenson 2012).

The majority of information from schools to parents is top-down and one-way with fewer opportunities for parents to communicate or respond to school communications. For example, as well as difficulties finding information aimed at parents on school websites in the UK (Apps,

Brewster and Linse, forthcoming) and other European countries (e.g. Martins, 2016), there can be few or no mechanisms for parents to respond to information or initiate dialogue. From a school's perspective too this has been highlighted. NAHT focus sessions (2017) and Parentkind surveys (2016) of school staff have suggested that while communication between schools and families happens regularly, often on a day-to-day basis, there is less clarity on the consistency, effectiveness and coordination of this activity and how two-way it really is.

One aspect that needs to be considered more carefully is what the best method is to convey and discuss different *types* of information. Schools may be effective in one area but not another and different approaches are likely to be needed for different areas. For example, Parentkind's 2018 survey of 1500 parents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland found that school communications around news and events and children's progress in different subjects were seen as quite effective or very effective by 78% of parents compared to only 68% for communicating ways to support children's learning at home.

This corresponds with a tendency in the research literature to focus on activities from a school perspective and limited information from parents on their responses to communication from schools. Research on parental preferences and views on communication is very limited in the UK and studies from elsewhere are not recent (e.g. Cattermole and Robinson, 1985). While preferences will vary from school to school and across different parent groups - meaning individual schools will always need to consult parents on this - more large studies focusing on parents' views of the communication process are needed to understand overall effectiveness.

A further aspect of school-home communication that is overlooked in practice and research is the role of the child in the communication between schools and parents despite the important mediating role children play in the process (Ida Dannesboe, 2015).

Some important steps forward in this area would be for schools to regularly review all forms of communication with families and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness from a parental perspective. Where it is possible and sustainable to allow (more) two-way dialogue this should be explored.

Medium of communication

Face to Face

Face to face contact between schools and parents is often implicitly seen as the primary form of school-home communication and parental participation and it has been argued that other forms of communication such as written communication are at risk of being overlooked in this respect (Apps, Brewster and Lines, forthcoming).

Face to face meetings between teachers and family members provide an opportunity for direct two-way communication. Parent-teacher meetings (PTMs; also known as parent consultations, parents' evenings) are typically the most regular opportunity for this. Encouraging teachers to see face to face meetings with parents, especially PTMs, as an opportunity for shared learning and encouraging the use of active listening techniques has been suggested (Harvard Family Research Project, 2009).

However, the private nature of parent-teacher meetings has limited the available research to draw on in this area. Very few studies go beyond identifying broad barriers to communication. Typically, studies interview teachers and parents and ask them to recall their exchanges (e.g. Ellis, Lock and Summis, 2015) which limits the amount of information they can reliably provide. Research understanding of parent-teacher consultations has been described as a 'black hole' where we have little information on the fine detail of these exchanges (Maclure and Walker, 2000).

However, a few studies - mainly in secondary schools - where audio recordings of parent-teacher conversations have been made and analysed provide some insights. They suggest that communication tends to run on quite restricted lines, with parents and teachers communicating in restricted ways and taking particular roles. For example, Thomas, Keough and Hay (2015) suggest parents are 'complicit' with teachers in trying to show themselves as a normative 'good parent' and this may get in the way of a more informed and equal exchange of information around the child and their learning.

What is known is that while teachers and parents in observational studies tend to converse in friendly, mutually supportive ways, there is limited joint decision-making, or more meaningful dialogue and parents tend to respond as passive receivers of information (Bilton, Jackson and Hymer, 2018).

Parental satisfaction with communication in PTMs has been reported as generally low (MaClure and Walker, 2010) but research has been on a small scale and much greater focus on this area is needed.

Building respect, trust and personal regard has been highlighted (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). This can be particularly important in secondary schools where face to face contact is less frequent. In secondary schools with substantially reduced levels of communication and engagement parents report lower levels of trust (Reschly and Christenson 2012, reported in Education Scotland).

Techniques such as 'structured conversations' may be helpful in supporting particular groups of parents such as those with children who have special needs (Lendrum, Barlow and Humphrey, 2015) and in general to build relationships with parents-see contemporary practice case study below.

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

Tredworth was the lowest achieving school in Gloucestershire when Andy Darby became head teacher in 2002. His first priority was to improve engagement with the 35 per cent of parents who at the time had little to do with the school. Tredworth began using the structured conversations approach as part of the Achievement for All programme as the bedrock of its parental engagement strategy.

Teachers are regularly given a day away from the classroom for a series of 30-minute in-depth conversations. Teachers learn how to recap a conversation, summarise complex or convoluted points that both sides understand, and set targets. Parents can leave their pre-school children in a crèche at the school during the meeting.

Parents of every pupil in the school are invited into the school for a structured conversation with the teacher twice a year. For years 3 to 5 this is increased to three times a year. The parental discussions always involve the child's class teacher and the teaching assistant. Once a year the child is invited into the meeting to discuss how objectives have been met and to set new binding targets for the next academic year. This level of commitment takes a teacher out of class for at least two days a year but the supply cover cost is covered by Pupil Premium funding attracted by pupils on free school meals.

Parent attendance at Tredworth's structured conversations is now 97 per cent. Attainment of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities is above average for every year group. For example, 81 per cent of pupils classified as having SEN and/or disabilities achieved key stage 2 Level 4 or above in English and maths in 2012. The national average was 46 per cent. **Head teacher update (2014)** http://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/structured-conversations-to-engage-parents/66856

The Harvard Family Research project (2018) has also produced tips for parent-teacher consultations (see Appendix 1).

It's important to consider that face-to-face communication between schools and parents does not only involve verbal communication. Because parents are likely to know very little about the time children spend at school and what they do there, sharing information on their children's work and progress makes children's learning 'visible' to parents. The sharing of visual artefacts such as photographs, children's work and other media is thought to be a helpful way of doing this with parents particularly in the early years (Rouse, 2015). However, while such documenting of children's learning is commonly used in EY settings, less is known about the extent to which this is utilised with parents in face to face meetings (Christie, 2014).

While a range of roles may be played by surveys and questionnaires and other types of written communication to parents, schools report that it is 'face to face conversation and building relationships based on trust and integrity' that is most powerful (National College, 2010). True listening and responsiveness are highlighted as key aspects of this process, along with ensuring that 'promises are kept'. Working with the parents who feel cut off from the school and are therefore most likely to hold negative views is of the greatest importance.

In order to develop their communication work schools might benefit from exploring whether some parent-teacher meetings could be audio-recorded and used as a training resource.

While teachers and parents agree on the benefits of two-way communication an elephant in the room can be teachers' as well as parents' confidence in engaging with each other. Training and CPD for teachers on this issue and communication skills in general appear to be insufficient or highly limited (National Parent Forum Scotland, 2017). For example, teaching students are unlikely to have received lectures or training in communication skills such as active listening, or conflict management [personal communication, CCCU teacher training team]. Regular face-to-face contact may assist in better two-way communication because parents may be seen as less of a threat by teachers (Reshly and Christensen, 2012).

Email

Emails are commonly used by schools to communicate information to parents. The systems predominantly used in the UK to send emails en masse to parents may not allow parents to respond, which could inadvertently send a message to parents that interactive communication is not supported.

Small scale qualitative research suggests that parents want more two-way and fluid communication with schools (e.g. McKenna and Millen, 2013) but without further more robust research it is hard to know the extent to which this holds for all parent groups, exactly what is required or whether this would have an impact on children's educational outcomes.

Newsletters

Newsletters are a common way for schools to communicate large amounts of information to parents. In both paper and most electronic newsletters in the UK there is no immediate opportunity for response, dialogue or clarification (Apps, 2015).

The 'common sense' recommendation that schools need to tailor communication to the literacy levels and language of families has been highlighted (e.g. National Parent Forum Scotland, 2017). Unexplained jargon, abbreviations, acronyms and general 'teacherspeak' can be common in reports and newsletters from schools to parents (Harris and Goodall, 2007; Apps, 2017). Outside the UK examples of this kind of language have been found in newsletters (Keogh, 1997), and more than half the personal letters to parents and signs around schools - even where they have

specifically signed up to principles of plain English (Linse and Van Vlack , 2015) and in special schools (Nagro and Stein, 2016). It seems likely that this barrier to communication is widespread in schools.

Reading levels should also be addressed. English primary school newsletters have been estimated to require a reading age of 12-15 (Apps, 2017; Apps, Brewster and Linse, forthcoming). Guidelines on writing at a level that has wide accessibility suggest that a reading age of 12 should be used, or a reading age of 8 where universal accessibility is required. Making communication inclusive to a wide range of parents, including those with EAL, learning disabilities or lower levels of literacy, is an area that schools are in a position to address reasonably easily. Readability estimates are available on many computer packages such as Microsoft Word and freely on the internet. Schools could be encouraged to check all communication using these tools.

The fine detail of the language used in newsletters might need consideration - particularly as they are uni-directional communication. Subtle use of language may send messages that can undermine partnership. For example, Keogh (1997) highlighted the use of the pronouns in written communication from schools. She argued that the use of 'I' 'we' 'my' and 'our' maintain a relationship with parents that is "essentially asymmetrical, with schools having the superordinate positioning" (p. 21). The use of infantilising language and tone, where letters for parents are written as if for children (e.g. "Only 10 more sleeps to Christmas!!") has also been noted (Apps, forthcoming). Again, more research would help clarify whether and the extent to which such factors impact on parents' relationships with schools.

Part of making written communication accessible is also to consider the page design and layout of items such as newsletters, and careful use of text features such as bolding and bullet points. There is guidance on best practice in the layout and use of text features in school newsletters (e.g. PROSE checklist Nagro 2015); and the development of additional guidance for schools, based on literature from the more general field of communication studies, could be of use. As with issues of readability this could be addressed relatively simply and while we lack research evidence that inaccessibility of language is a key facet of poorer school-home relationships, it is clearly good practice to take steps to minimise the possibility of this.

Websites, social media and apps

With electronic communication very much at the forefront of school-home relations, there are opportunities for increased convenience, efficiency, and effectiveness in knowledge transfer between schools and parents (Zieger & Tan, 2012) and to creating a third 'virtual space' to bridge the gap between home and school (Grant, 2011). Most schools are already using social media and texts to communicate information to parents-though this tends not to be two-way communication (Estyn, 2018), and we still know relatively little about the best ways for schools to use these.

Small scale European studies from outside the UK suggest school websites, while informative, are uni-directional and allow few opportunities for parents to be more than passive consumers of messages from and about schools or have limited involvement in children's learning (Martins, 2016; Limmins, 2017).

A number of phone apps are available to support school-home communication. For example, Class Dojo is a free phone app, developed in the US. It allows teachers to assign positive or negative 'Dojo points' to children relating to behaviour and record aspects of their progress, which children and their parents can view. It aims to increase parents' awareness of what their child is doing in school and their progress and allows teachers to email and message parents individually or collectively. This app and others such as Bambizo, which allows parents to communicate with each other, and Pupil Asset, which allows parents to track pupils' attendance,

behaviour and progress are informally supported by educational opinion pieces, along with online environments where teachers, pupils and parents can share information, in real time, such as Edmodo.com. For Early Years home learning-the app Easey Peasey has been tested in the UK and shows promising results. These tools have yet to be fully evaluated for long term impact on parental participation but may offer a new direction for research to explore.

Reports and reading records

Other written communication includes reports and reading records. Exceptionally little research on parents' responses to these methods of communication exists. The kinds of one-way communication and 'asymmetry' between teachers and parents has been observed in some studies. For example, an Italian study Dusi and Falcon (2015) found that teachers' comments in learning-focused school-home diaries fell into four main categories: invitations and suggestions; orders and obligations; requests and the provision of information. The communication was largely one way, lacking in educative function and in only one case in 69 diaries studied had the teacher contacted the parent to communicate a positive outcome. Schools could be encouraged to review how best to construct these kinds of written communication. Apps, such as those described above, may offer ways for teachers to see more clearly the 'balance' of positive information conveyed to parents in relation to other types of communication.

Texts

The medium of communication may be important. Texts are increasingly being used by schools to convey vital information such as school closures in bad weather but are beginning to be explored as a medium to support school parent communication and home learning. A UK randomised controlled trial of over fifteen thousand KS3 children (Parental Engagement Project, PEP-Education Endowment Foundation, 2016) - one of the very few RCTs in the area of school-home communication - found that children whose parents received texts about supporting learning at home, upcoming tests and homework submission made around one months' additional progress in Mathematics (though not English and Science). These children also had lower absenteeism than children whose parents received usual school communication, though the effects were small. Parents received an average of 30 texts across an academic year. Importantly, both schools and parents liked the use of texts and the cost was low at around £6 per child (though the benefits of having a dedicated coordinator for the text communication was raised and would add considerably to costs if required). The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), who funded the research, suggests that the evidence is moderate and texting should be considered a 'promising practice'.

More work needs to be done on the most effective content of text messaging communications but it may be a method that could be effective with relatively little input. For example, single sentence messaging to parents of high school children at risk of failing courses - telling them what students were doing well on and where they could improve reduced drop-out rates from 15.8% to 9.3% - a 41% reduction and exam failure from 16% to 9% (Kraft and Rogers, 2015)

Frequency and timing of communication

Parents experiencing 'information overload' from schools has been reported (Harris and Goodall, 2007) and schools need to consider how much and how frequently they should communicate with parents. Stevens (2018) in a longitudinal study of parents and teachers of children with serious behaviour problems and the transition to secondary school found that very frequent - sometimes daily - communication from schools to parents was felt to be 'stressful' and at times 'infuriated' parents (p. 795).

However, in the main, regular communication is associated with parents being more likely to be viewed as partners in their children's learning (Reglin et al 2012; Harris and Goodall 2009) and can be especially important at key times such as transition (Harris and Goodall, 2009).

Getting the amount and frequency of information and communication right can only be gauged through consultation with families, as this is likely to vary individually, from school to school, from one parent group to another, and across different types of information/subjects. School and staff capacity for frequent communication will also vary.

Ensuring equal access to information and opportunities for two-way communication

Two-way communication can help teachers understand parents' support needs - which can be very varied (Egbert and Salsbury 2009). There are a range of parent groups where research suggests particular care should be taken to ensure equal access to information and opportunities for two way communication.

For example, it is increasingly important that schools consider ways to support parental participation of migrant families (Hamilton, 2013; Jeynes, 2011; Naidoo, 2015; Walker 2014; Olivos and Mendoza, 2010). Teachers' qualities, skills and experience are highlighted as important for supporting migrant families. A US study of elementary school teachers found that those who were most able to advocate for and support migrant families tended to be bi-lingual and/or to possess 'cultural competence' gained from inter-cultural experiences (Haneda and Alexander, 2015). Specific guidance on good practice in working with families with English is a secondary language is available from Gathered Together

(http://gatheredtogether.bemis.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/Involving-All-Parents-Report-on-Work-with-ParentCouncils.pdf)

Fathers' involvement in children's education is an important predictor of educational outcomes. Irrespective of the level of involvement of a child's mother, fathers' involvement has been shown to predict children's educational outcomes (Kim and Hill, 2015). It is important that fathers are considered in parental participation work. The specific needs of fathers, especially non-resident fathers, around communication should be considered. Guidance on working with fathers can be found at Families Need Fathers (2016), including information on inclusive practice for non-resident parents. Some suggestions for working with non-resident fathers include: taking both parents' contact details on admission, establishing rights and responsibilities of each parent, initiating contact with non-resident parents, ensuring all relevant staff know there is a non-resident parent, and know how the school communicates and stays in contact with them and which information is shared; providing a leaflet and page on the school website which explains how outlining how non-resident parents can engage with the school.

Parents with special needs, particularly a learning disability, should also be considered. Work from the US suggests, surprisingly, that even special schools are not very good at providing clear and readable material for parents (Nagro and Stein, 2016). There are a number of resources for producing 'easy read' materials in general (e.g. Department of Health and Social Care, 2010; Change, 2016) and Nagro (2015) has also produced the PROSE checklist - a guidance document on how to lay out written material to make it more accessible.

The National Strategy for Parenting (2012) also recommends schools ask themselves the following questions concerning their communication strategies:

- What arrangements are there to include parents who live a distance away or in a rural setting?

- How are parents made aware that they can contribute in many different ways - such as text, email, phone, leaving comments and suggestions at the school or setting, as well as through meetings?
- What information is available in the languages used by parents of the children and young people and/or those living in the community?
- How are parents made aware that they can get access to support such as translators to help them be involved?

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

After an evaluation of its relationship and methods of communicating with parents, Pen Y Fai Church in Wales Primary School, Bridgend, recognised that it needed to improve lines of communication between parents and the school. It established that its parents were keen to adopt new communication methods and opted to use a digital application (app) that allows two way communication privately between the school and individual parents. The school uses the app to:

- inform parents of events and work in class and at the school as a whole
- celebrate and reward success
- as a means of sharing pupils' work with parents
- give parents guidance on how they can support with individual areas for development
- inform parents of changes at the school
- as a method for parents to raise concerns with the school
- invite feedback from parents on changes to policies such as behaviour, anti-bullying and uniform

As a result of the introduction of the app, and as experience of the system grows, the school has reduced its use of other communication strategies. All parents now access the app, which is significantly higher than those previously using Twitter alone. The school uses the analytics functions built in to review who is receiving messages. The school has in place a policy of no use after 6pm and is currently developing an acceptable use policy. (**Estyn, 2018**)

Suggested measures

- Survey or other data (e.g. simple 'real-time' data collected on exiting parent-teacher meetings or other occasions via pin boards/pressing button display/posting token/bead in slot) on parental satisfaction with school-home communication with regard to medium, content, level of information, frequency and usefulness in supporting home learning.
- Metrics for online communication such as hits on parent sections of the school website or school Facebook pages, along with survey or other data on parents rating their usefulness in supporting their child's education and key qualitative feedback from parents on where they could be improved
- Possible use of validated questionnaires with parents on their relationships with the school. Some existing measures in this area are: The Family-School Questionnaire (FSQ, Midgett, 2000); Teacher-parent survey (Izzo et al 1999); Parent-Teacher Relationship scale (Vickers and Minke, 1995) Parent-Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (Kohl et al, 2000). They would need to be assessed for suitability.

Summary of success in this pillar

Table 2, below, summarises the research and practice related to this pillar. Good communication underlies all the pillars of the framework, especially learning at home (pillar 3) and parental involvement in school (pillar 4). When this pillar of parental participation is working well in a school there should be a good 'flow' of information between home and school and parents will feel their information needs are met, or will know how/who to ask for any further information. School staff, in turn, should feel that they have good information from families and are aware of important factors that may affect children's learning and behaviour in school and feel able to both initiate and respond to parents. The ability to communicate with parents will be enhanced by the use of different media that staff feel confident in using. More importantly, the relationships built with parents, through good communication, school strategies and support will make staff feel more confident in their interactions with parents by whatever media.

Most schools already use a variety of ways to communicate with parents. However, only a few consult parents on their preferences around communication (Estyn, 2018). Successful pillar 1 work would include regular consideration of school communication channels and approaches- in terms of parent preference, effectiveness and the extent to which they allow genuine two-way communication.

Table 2: Summary of Research and Practice for Pillar 2: Effective Two-way Communication

Strength of evidence	• Mainly emerging evidence with some **good** evidence (e.g. texting). • Good communication cited as important to parental participation work in the literature, particularly in practice-focused research • Good communication intuitively underpins all parental participation work.
Examples of suggested practice (what good practice could look like)	• **Face to face conversation to reduce staff and parents' anxieties** for building relationships. **Trust and integrity** are considered the most important aspects by parents and teachers. • Ensuring **parent-teacher meetings are accessible and 'parent-friendly'** • 'True' **listening and responsiveness** and ensuring that **'promises are kept'**. • **Not using jargon**, abbreviations and acronyms • Use of an **appropriate reading level for all written communication**. • Considering the **communication needs of particular groups**-e.g. EAL parents, migrant parents, parents with special needs and non-resident fathers. • Appropriate **use of electronic communication** for convenience, efficiency, and effectiveness. • **Including children** more in the school-home communication.
Key promising approaches and 'quick wins' for schools	• Use of **text messaging** for home learning support • Use of **mobile phone apps** – e.g. Class Dojo and Easey Peasey (early years). • Use free tools to **check readability of all written communication** to parents • Use of **'structured conversations'** techniques
Gaps in the research/research issues	• Research to **separate *what* information/skills or resources are imparted** to parents **from *how/how well* these are communicated** would be valuable. • More research on **parents' views on aspects of effective communication** is needed.

	• Survey or other data on teacher training / CPD in communication skills would be useful. • Experimental research on the effectiveness of different mediums, frequencies and content of school-home communication would be valuable
Suggested measures of success	• Survey/interview or other data (e.g. simple 'real-time' data collected on exiting parent-teacher meetings or other occasions via pin boards/pressing button display/posting token/bead in slot) on parental satisfaction with school-home communication with regard to medium, content, level of information and frequency and rated usefulness in supporting home learning. • Metrics for online communication such as hits on parent sections of the school website or school Facebook pages, along with other data on parents rating of the usefulness of these in supporting their child's education and ideas for improvement. • Measures of parental and teacher satisfaction with key face-to-face communication such as on the night 'exit' evaluations of parent-teacher consultations.

6. Pillar 3: Supporting Learning at Home

Introduction

This pillar is concerned with how schools can encourage and support learning in the home. Research has suggested that the aspects of home life/home learning that have the biggest impact on children's educational attainment are parental attitudes, expectations and aspirations related to education and the quality of parent-child relationships. These are considered in this chapter along with parental involvement in homework and the use of school-based and community-based workshops to help parents develop skills for home learning.

To be most effective, parental engagement needs to be rooted in the home, in an attitude that fosters learning in the home, as this has been shown to be most positively related to children's achievement (e.g. Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Sylva et al. 2003; Niklas and Scheneider, 2017). Parental engagement in children's learning in the home has a greater effect on their achievement than parental involvement in school-based activities (Goodall 2013; Altschul 2011), but this needs to be co-ordinated with learning in schools. For example, parents engaging in learning activities in the home is most effective when it is in tandem with similar critical instructions and teaching as children receive at school (Crosnoe, 2012).

Effective learning at home can both complement and compensate for good or poor schools. A US study of 10,000 teenagers found that "family social capital" was a much stronger predictor of 18-year-olds' educational attainment than a number of measures of school quality (Dufur, Parcel and Troutman, 2012). Pupils at weaker schools, who came from homes where parents were closely involved in their children's education, performed better in tests than children at better schools whose parents were less involved. The key element provided by parents was described as "family social capital" and related to parent-child relationships, trust, open communication and active engagement with the child's academic life.

The Home Learning Environment

The term 'home learning environment' has been used to describe the range of behaviours, attitudes, aspirations and other elements of this concept of parental participation. The home

learning environment is described as the learning and activities children experience at home in the context of their family and community (NCB, 2017).

The home learning environment for the early years is relatively well described with research finding the following key behaviours important predictors of children's later educational attainment and considered an 'index' of the early home learning environment:

- Reading, sharing books and going to the library
- Going out on visits
- Playing with print (letters and numbers)
- Singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Drawing and painting (making meaningful marks) (Melhuish et al. 2008).

These behaviours have all been linked to children's educational attainment throughout their education and showing good predictive power up to the end of compulsory schooling and beyond (Feinstein and Symmons, 1999).

Likewise, a study of the socialisation of working class children succeeding above prediction (Mayo and Siraj (2015) highlighted the role of emotional and practical support from families and that children succeeding above prediction were more likely to be socialised with 'active cultivation' approaches as described by Lareau (2003), where deliberate effort is put into teaching and developing the child, rather than more laissez-faire 'natural accomplishment of growth' approaches. This suggests that schools may need to promote a message that parents can, and need to be, active in directing and supporting their children's learning. The early home learning index described above illustrates some 'active cultivation' activities, where parents actively 'teach' or develop their child's understand in key areas.

However, it is important to remember that while some aspects of home learning may be shown to correlate with educational outcomes, a one-size fits all approach with families in terms of *supporting home learning* may not be appropriate. Home learning will vary within families and as children develop. Moreover, for parents it may not be seen as something separate from parenting in general, because parents are involved in children's lives more broadly than just education. In line with this, some authors define parental engagement as "parents' engagement in their children's lives to influence the children's overall actions" (Kim 2009, p. 89) and "the whole culture and belief system of family around education, and how this is talked about" (Mortimer et al, 2017).

A first step for schools (and research) is to gather more detailed information on how parents actually support learning at home for children at different ages. Parents can consider learning in a very holistic, developmental way, that is not limited to the kinds of academic formal learning activities known to correlate with educational outcomes (e.g. Hunt et al, 2010). To connect with parents, it may be helpful to know more about how they perceive home learning in order to tailor support which will resonate with them and fit into family life. It is also important to note that there are well observed social class differences in the home learning environments of children from different socio-economic groups from as early as three years of age (e.g. Goodman and Greg, 2010) and that throughout the literature on parental participation earlier support and 'intervention' is more effective (e.g. Huat-See and Gorard, 2014; Education Endowment Foundation, 2018).

Attitudes and aspirations

Parental attitudes to education appear to be the primary driver of educational attainment and their impact can be traced throughout a child's education (Patrikou, 2005) across a large number of high quality, very large and longitudinal quantitative studies. For example, in an international meta-analysis of 37 studies across all stages of education, Castro et al (2015) found that high academic expectations, developing and maintaining communication about school and (earlier) developing reading habits were the parental engagement behaviours most associated with educational attainment.

In the UK, Goodman and Greg (2010) found that amongst secondary school children, after controlling for long-run family background factors and prior attainment, young people were more likely to do well at GCSE if their parents thought they would go on to Higher Education (in addition, they also did better when parents provided material resources towards education including private tuition, computer and internet access, spent time on shared family meals and outings and had few quarrels with their children).

Researchers have noted a particular style of 'academic socialisation' (Hill, 2009), where over long periods of time parents have talked to their children about their expectations for their future education and 'a good job' and discussed the practicalities of achieving this. This appears to be a better predictor of attainment than more outward focused measures of parental participation such as volunteering at school and 'educational' trips such as to libraries and museums (Hill, 2009).

It is important not to underestimate the aspirations of parents from poorer backgrounds with regard to their children's education. In the UK parents across all socio-economic groups (97 %) have high hopes of their going to university at birth-higher than the percentage who will actually go- but by the time these children are 9, while 81 % of the mothers from the most affluent group only 37 % of the mothers in the lowest income groups think they will go (Goodman and Greg, 2010).These findings highlight that expectations and aspirations can change over time and also that both expectations and aspirations can be high without this always translating into reality. One factor that this has been attributed to is the lack of what is called 'bridging capital' (Putnam, 2000) in disadvantaged families - the social networks, skills and resources that help parents provide concrete plans and routes into education and employment for their children such as contact with adults already at university or working in the field the young person is interested in entering.

Because of their long lasting impact it is important that schools and other stakeholders keep up parental engagement initiatives among parents of older children (Patrikou, 2005). There can be a tendency to see all types of parental engagement as fixed qualities. It is true that earlier parent 'interventions' of all kinds are associated with greater chances of success in terms of child educational, social and emotional outcomes (EIF, 2014) but it is not correct that parental engagement does not change during secondary school and college. For example, Skaliotis (2010), using data from the UK's Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England (LSYPE), found that almost half of parents reported a change in their level of involvement in their children's education between year 9 and year 11.

Schools could inform parents about the importance of aspirations and provide more tailored support to help them support their children, particularly around transitions such as the transition to post-compulsory education, which has been highlighted as an area where parents, especially those who have not gone into higher education themselves, lack practical support from schools and colleges (Apps and Christie, 2018). Some suggestions are that both schools and local authorities provide more information to parents about how to support their child's decisions about higher education and choose an HE institution, as they do for parents choosing primary

and secondary schools; simple timetables for parents on the process of application, and timing of and funding for attending open days and so on; face-to-face, personalised meetings that discuss their child's interests and intentions as opposed to more general information on university which can be jargon laden and hard to navigate; acknowledgement of the emotional issues of children leaving home to go to university and how these can limit decisions about going/where to go; and information/events that help parents who have not been to university understand 'what it is like' and gain a mental picture of what their child will be doing.

The parent-child relationship

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the parent-child relationship appears to be a key aspect of home learning. Along with parental expectations around current and future academic performance, parenting that is warm, responsive to the child's needs, and consistent in terms of rules and discipline, has been identified as the best predictor of academic attainment among children from low socio-economic backgrounds (Watkins and Howard, 2015). Other large scale, high quality studies have identified reassurance of worth, along with lack of family conflict, as an important predictor of long term educational outcomes (Cutrona et al., 1994).

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP, http://www.hfrp.org/), an academic centre of excellence on parental engagement in the US, has published a number of recommendations about supporting parental engagement in adolescence. HFRP stresses the importance of encouraging high expectations in the home, school and the community. They see parenting that promotes a sense of self-efficacy, task completion and confidence in tackling more difficult coursework as important elements.

HFRP recommend that schools can help promote parental expectations through frequent communication on students' progress and offering opportunities for parents to 'connect in and out of school'.

Homework

Surveys find that parents are already highly involved in supporting learning at home, for example through supporting homework. Parentkind's 2018 Parents Insights Survey, for example, found 94% of those surveyed said they had helped with homework. However, helping with homework can be a source of stress for parents and many parents want to help but feel unable to (BECTA, 2010).

The evidence on the educational effects of parental support for homework is mixed. Patall, Cooper and Robinson (2008) in a large review study found a strong link between increased achievement when parents regulate homework time and when they help students when they struggle. However, significant results were found for only elementary students (ages 6-13) and in literacy and were not seen when parents simply monitored homework.

Certain aspects of the context for parental help with homework can cloud the findings on its effectiveness as an aspect of parental participation. For example, the 'homework paradox' describes the effect seen in research where children who get more frequent help from parents may be seen to do worse educationally - not because parents cannot positively affect children's learning through this type of support but because parents are more likely intervene when children are struggling.

Schools could consider ways in which parents can contribute to, be informed about and be involved in homework for children at different ages and stages of their education. Homework needs to be communicated to parents in a range of styles and the homework task itself needs to offer a range of different activities (Ofsted, 2011).

School and community-based workshops

School or community based workshops where parents receive training in how to support their children's learning have been a key intervention to try to support home learning. These have mostly been based in early years. For example, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF website, 2018) funded three projects - Mind the Gap, Parenting Academy and SPOKES – which were all workshop based and where parents were advised on how to support their children's learning. No clear impacts on children's attainments were found in the three programmes but one of the difficulties of these and other workshop based interventions was that it was difficult to attract and retain parents and therefore it can be difficult to assess the true effectiveness of the workshop. This can be a particular difficulty with programmes aimed at disadvantaged families, which have shown few or only weak effects (Hackworth, 2017).

EEF found that financial incentives for parents - which were provided in one of the trials (Parenting Academy) improved attendance but how sustainable such an approach would be in schools in questionable.

More encouraging was another EEF-funded project, Texting Parents, which sent texts to parents of secondary school children regarding dates of upcoming tests and homework submission and information on subjects being covered at school. This study found children of parents who received the texts did better in their Maths GCSE, and had lower absenteeism, than a control group. The differences were small but as the delivery cost was very low (£6 per pupil-as compared with the cost of a workshop, for example), the EEF concluded that this is an example of promising practice.

Whether or not face-to-face workshop style support can be justified, given issues around recruitment, retention and cost, giving parents very specific instructions with regarding to home learning does appear to be important. For example, Erion (2006) states:

> "The state of research on parent tutoring has reached the point where its use is justified and there are some indications as to how treatment should be developed and implemented. Though more work needs to be done before specific guidelines can be put forth, components of a parent tutoring program should include teaching parents the tutoring skills to a mastery level, quantifiable follow-up implementation checks, and quantifiable checks on the amount of tutoring." (Erion, 2006 p.100).

In line with this, a review of 16 interventions including 1,340 families, aimed at encouraging parent-child reading as a route to increasing children's literacy, found teaching parents specific activities and approaches was more effective than simply encouraging parents to hear their children read (Sénéchal and Young, 2008). This approach is thought to be particularly beneficial for 'at risk' families than more general activities such as reading to children (Smees and Sammons, 2018). Such techniques might be incorporated into written materials and instructions for parents by schools at a much lower cost than face-to-face workshops and this kind of 'harnessing' of research findings in a more cost-effective way could be an important area to research further.

How home learning support is promoted

The ways in which programmes and activities for parents are 'badged' can be important (Welsh Government 2016; Apps et al 2007). Parents may not be drawn to attend something described as 'literacy support' or other names suggestive of formal education. This seemingly small but important aspect of supporting parental participation should be considered when designing any support.

A whole school approach is recommended for any workshops or programmes in school. Front line staff such as receptionists need to be aware of what is being offered and welcoming,

personal invitations may be more effective than blanket approaches/letter in book bag, reducing anxiety by letting parents know who else is on the course and ongoing encouragement and interest from all staff are suggested as important to the success of these activities (Welsh Government, 2016)

Likewise, the exact presentation of a homework task can be important. For example, Colgate, Ginns and Bagnall (2017) in an Australian quasi-experimental study found that both teacher invitations in kindergarten and child 'invitations' in grade 2 classes to complete a home reading challenge were more effective than the usual presentation of the task without invitation.

In addition, home learning might provide a further opportunity for two-way communication (pillar 2). Schools might consider ways that parents and children could share information on how home learning tasks went, in order to refine these tasks, to gain a better understanding of how home learning happens, and understand parent and child support needs and to develop opportunities for further learning (see case study below).

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

This study was carried out as part of the Home–School Knowledge Project in a Year 2 class of an inner-city infant school in the south-west of England. It was theorised within an action research framework which was designed to give ownership to the pupils, school and parents involved. Through a collaborative process, activities were devised with the aim of acknowledging pupils' out-of-school worlds and building on these within the classroom. In the previous year the project had carried out several activities with this class, including making a video about writing in school and providing pupils with disposable cameras to use at home. Each activity was reviewed after completion and its outcome impacted upon the next planned action.

The children were given a shoebox to take home over the Christmas holidays. With the class teacher they composed a letter which told parents and carers about the activity:

'*The idea of the shoebox is for each child to be able to use it to collect items they think would be a good and motivational stimulus for writing*'.

Parents were specifically asked to talk to their child, to discuss both why they had chosen specific artefacts and how they might use them in their writing. The range of writing opportunities that the artefacts might provide was also outlined: 'stories, instructions, a factual leaflet etc.' In terms of participation 29 out of 30 children took part. After they had brought their boxes back children were given the opportunity to present the contents to the class. This sharing took place as a circle time-type activity, and after these oral presentations the children wrote. Once the writing was finished it was word processed, illustrated and spiral bound, and the children composed an authorial 'blurb' for the cover.

Following the activity the class teacher was interviewed, and asked to identify children on whom the activity had made a positive impact in terms of writing behaviour. This judgement was by definition a qualitative one, as no criteria or goals for assessment had been set for the task. She identified 11 children who had made what she termed a writing breakthrough. These children were then interviewed. (**Scanlan, 2012**)

Barriers to home learning

The following barriers to parents' engagement are suggested by Learning Wales (2016):

- Time pressures of family life
- Family circumstances/structure may be complicated, with separations and new partners

- Language barriers between home and school
- Families may be overwhelmed by other issues - e.g. poverty, caring responsibilities, health problems, general anxiety or post-natal depression.
- Geography and physical barriers, reliance on public transport, physical barriers for those with disabilities or health problems.
- Lack of confidence: parents/carers may find school brings back unpleasant memories of their own school days.
- Fear of a lack of knowledge or skills, e.g. low literacy.
- Fear being judged by other parents/carers or staff-e.g. being seen to 'need help' or fear of being seen as a 'bad parent/carer'.
- Feeling they don't fit in with the dominant middle-class culture of the school.
- Suspicion and mistrust: parents/carers may believe they won't be listened to and taken seriously by the school.

Other research adds to these points suggesting that working mothers are particularly affected by difficulties fitting in home learning as a 'third' shift after work and domestic responsibilities (Hayley-Lock and Posey-Maddox, 2015) and two-parent households are more likely to be engaged than lone parents (Mcdowall, Taumoepeau and Schaughhency, 2017; Skaliotis, 2010). A further constraint on home learning may be the material resources available within families (Dauber and Epstein, 1993).

It is important for schools to consider these and other factors affecting their school community and work with parents to find ways to support home learning that are inclusive and sympathetic to families lives. Many of these issues could be addressed by better communication with parents and understanding of their lives so that homework and other tasks could be designed with this in mind; more opportunities to interact with the school staff, in both formal and informal ways to build relationships; consulting parents about the best times and methods of meeting with them/conveying information; and where budgets allow, or this can be provided at low or no cost, providing transport and/or support such as crèches for important events.

Suggested Measures

- Parental feedback such as surveys/interviews or other data (e.g. simple 'real-time' data collected after home learning activities via feedback slips attached to the homework task/invited facebook or other social media posts/pin boards/pressing button display/posting token/bead in slot) on home learning activities/homework to ascertain parents' involvement and value in supporting their child's learning.
- Parental surveys or other evidence on whether curriculum information has been understood by parents and valuable to them in supporting their child's learning.
- Evidence that any parent or family learning activities provided are well attended and considered valuable by attendees.

Summary of success in this pillar

Table 3, below, summarises the research and practice related to this pillar. When work in this pillar is successful, schools should know at least something about the home learning environments of the children they teach, and parents should know how to support their children's learning at home. Successful pillar 3 work requires that parents understand their importance in their child's education and feel confident, resourced and skilled to take an active lead in helping their child develop educationally. Parents also need to know the importance of

attitudes to and aspirations for their child's education and as far as is possible be supported with the social capital and other resources to realise these.

Schools that work well is this area will continue support across all age groups and be highly skilled at providing materials and support for parents that are well used and valued. Consultation of and co-production with parents to develop materials is likely to be an important element of developing materials and support that fits the school community; and a variety of materials and support will be needed within schools to support different groups of parents.

Table 3: Summary of Research and Practice for Pillar 3: Supporting Learning at Home

Strength of evidence	• Mainly emerging evidence with some moderate evidence (e.g. programmes focused in the early years; instructions around reading at home) • Parental expectations around learning and education, emotionally supportive parent-child relationships and the home learning environment are strongly associated with educational attainment in longitudinal (non-intervention) studies. • There is limited but encouraging evidence that schools can influence some factors related to home learning.
Examples of suggested practice (what good practice could look like)	• Promoting parental expectations through frequent communication of students' progress and offering opportunities for parents to 'connect in and out of school'. • Communicating homework to parents in a range of styles, with the homework task having a range of different activities. • Encouraging parents to offer a balanced degree of support for homework (too much support and intervention can have negative effects). • Offering discipline strategies and coaching skills in combination with support focused more on children's home learning. • Continuing to develop parental engagement initiatives with older children and taking account of parental changes in engagement. • Supporting parents with skills and resources to help them provide concrete plans and routes into further and higher education • Offering support to parents regarding their own learning.
Key promising approaches and 'quick wins' for schools	• Offering Family Learning Programmes where children and parents learn together. • Programmes that combine both support for helping children learn and parenting skills. • Providing parents with detailed information on exactly what to do and how to support home learning-e.g. reading at home. • Personal invitations to support events/complete home learning tasks rather than blanket approaches/letters in book bag. Careful consideration of how support events/information is described-e.g. parents are less likely to participate when programmes are badged as 'literacy'.
Gaps in the research/research issues	• In depth, qualitative research on home learning activities and the factors influencing these would be valuable. • Most is known about effectively supporting home literacy-more research on effective support across other curriculum areas is needed.

Suggested measures of success	• **Parental feedback on home learning activities/homework** (e.g. survey/interviews/simple 'real-time' data collected after home learning activities via feedback slips attached to the homework task/invited facebook or other social media posts/pin boards/pressing button display/posting token/bead in slot) suggests parents have been **involved and consider it valuable** in supporting their child's learning. • Parental surveys/interviews or other evidence suggests **curriculum information has been understood by parents and was valuable** to them in supporting their child's learning. • Evidence that any parent or **family learning activities provided are well attended and considered valuable** by attendees.

7. Pillar 4: Parent involvement in School Life (PI)

Introduction

The parental involvement in schools (PI) pillar of the framework – concerns the extent to which parents play a role in school life, decision making and strategy. Parental involvement has been the focus of a stream of research both as part of parental participation more generally and in its own right. Parental Involvement includes volunteering in school, involvement in formal structures such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), Parent Councils, Parent Voice groups, committees and other parent fora, attendance at school meetings and events and participation in consultations with the school around practice and policy. It may also include more informal contacts with the school which are not overtly focused on education or academic outcomes such as parents' involvement in fund raising activities, informal social events at or for the school, helping with maintenance of buildings or other work, supporting extra curricula activities and a range of other informal contacts. In many cases of PI, the onus lies on the school - rather than parents - to take action to enable parental involvement (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014) and most schools have a variety of ways for parents to be involved in school life.

Parental involvement has been highlighted as important to children's education:

> "The more involved the parents were in their children's school life (including volunteering in school, participating in Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) conferences, and teaching at home), the more positive the impact became on children's performance academically. [...] only a minority of parents in the United Kingdom are uninterested in their children's education. Instead the majority may experience difficulty in expressing their interest, something which is identified and acknowledged by professionals." (Social Mobility Commission, 2017)

Inclusive parental involvement is seen as one of the ways to reduce educational inequalities. For example, a recommendation from a recent Sutton Trust report (2018) was that all schools should seek to have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) with a wide range of parents represented as well as offering more informal ways for parents to raise concerns and connect with the school such as regular coffee mornings.

Research by Parentkind (2018), as part of the fourth annual parent survey, on 1,500 parents of children aged 5-18 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales shows that parents want to be involved. It found that the majority of parents (88%) wanted to play an active role in their child's education. Parents wanted to be consulted on areas such as curriculum, pupil behaviour, homework and budgets/school costs. However, less than a third of parents had been consulted

on any of these four areas. It has been observed that parental involvement even in 'high quality robust schools programmes' can be low and it can be hard for schools to retain parents who get involved (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018).

Parental involvement is often very much school-driven and correspondingly invitation to or opportunities for parental involvement are included explicitly in some theoretical models of parental engagement. For example, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggest that parents become involved in children's education (both in school and at home) because:

- They have developed a personal construction of the parental role that includes participation in their children's education
- They have developed a positive sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school, and
- They perceive opportunities for involvement from children and the school.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, parents will then choose types of involvement that align with their particular skillsets and knowledge, that fit with the demands on their time and energy and in response to specific invitations from their children and the school. The first two of these criteria may require sustained efforts on the part of schools to promote the importance of parents in children's education and provide skills that will make parents feel more confident in taking an active role in their child's learning. These longer term issues will need to be addressed but the third is more immediately actionable and highlights-as other authors have-the valuable role that children as well as schools may play in facilitating parental involvement.

Although parental involvement activities - taken in isolation – have a limited impact on children's educational outcomes (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Sylva et al. 2008; Harris and Goodall, 2008), it is suggested that PI is a 'manifestation of parental enthusiasm and positive parenting style' and it is through these factors that it influence child outcomes (Zellman and Waterman, 1998). The need for a broader, more inclusive conceptualization of parental involvement has also been highlighted by researchers. For example, it is suggested that it would be beneficial for all stakeholders in parental participation to see this as a "fluid and culturally sensitive combination of parent voice and parent presence, in both the home and school contexts" (McKenna and Millen, 2013). In line with this, research with a more nuanced analysis of parental involvement could be of value. For example, it could be valuable to consider the use of measures of parental satisfaction with their involvement, ratings of the value of their involvement - from a parental and school perspective - and the perceived impacts made and power/responsibility assigned and how PI influences parents relationships with schools and vice versa.

Developing Parental Involvement Work

While research literature on parental involvement is limited, there is a wealth of practice-based case studies and guidance for schools to draw on in developing their parental involvement work. For example, the Education Scotland toolkit (2017) suggests a number of important issues to consider. Parental involvement work needs to be based around issues of importance to both the school and to parents. Respect and value need to be placed on the contributions made by parents and realistic estimations given of the time and effort needed to work meaningfully on joint projects. Supporting those with less experience or confidence, including children and young people is highlighted as is working with the community (for more on this point see Pillar 5, below). Most importantly, the toolkit stresses that being results-driven, and being able to see what has been achieved and it being considered worthwhile is key.

Specifically, advice on Parent Councils, which have been studied in Scotland, where they have been compulsory in every school since 2006 as part of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, suggests to be most effective they need to:

- Include parents from a range of diverse and cultural backgrounds
- Support parents from the to be involved in events other than parent council meetings
- Work with feeder establishments to support increased levels of parental involvement generally within the parent body
- Ensure high quality, two way communications with all parents
- Review their constitutions at least once every four years
- Promote the role and function of the parent council within the school community
- Highlight examples of good practice outside of the school to the local authority and wider national bodies

(National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017). These points equally apply across the whole of the parental participation framework here.

While much of the research around parental involvement focuses on more formal structures such as PTAs and Parent Councils, schools often find multiple informal ways that parents can also be involved with school life. For example, parents may volunteer to help with trips, support out of hours school social events, such as school discos, and attend coffee mornings or other informal day time events, especially those for particular groups of parents e.g. parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities. These activities can provide schools and parents with an opportunity to develop relationships in a more relaxed way. Equally, parents' skills might be used to support the curriculum in different ways which could be valuable to schools and support relationships with parents. For example, Ofsted (2011), in a survey of primary and secondary schools, found a range of examples of schools involving parents in this way, such as:

- Parents with performance skills leading choirs or drama groups „
- Qualified sports coaches managing school sports teams
- Visitors talking in lessons about events they had witnessed (for example, grandparents who had been evacuees) „
- Bilingual speakers leading sessions in community languages, or translating „
- Working parents describing their jobs to classes, at careers events, or arranging work experience where they were employed.

Evaluating Parental Involvement

Like many other areas of parental participation, monitoring and evaluation of parental involvement is central to ensuring its effectiveness and 'fit' for individual schools.

Education Scotland in their 2017 toolkit suggest some ways schools might review their parental involvement work by asking the following questions:

- How are parents involved in deciding what the topics are?
- How do parents choose topics that are most important to them?
- Are all parents involved in this process in ways that are accessible and inclusive?
- What other ways are parents made aware that they can raise matters that are of concern to them?
- In what ways are all parents given the opportunity to contribute?
- How are people who are less confident or less experienced encouraged to take part?
- How will people know if their ideas and views have led to changes?

- How are community groups involved?

  (National Parenting Strategy, 2012).

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

At Maisdondieu Primary in Angus Council parents are involved in evaluating and contributing to the School Improvement Plan in a variety of different ways. One way that parents were involved was to rating ten outcomes for learning in order of priority that they wanted their children to achieve by the end of Primary 7. Practitioners used the priorities listed by parents within the School Improvement Plan. Below is the outcome table used with parents (**Education Scotland, 2010**).

Rating Outcomes of Learning	
To be literate and numerate.	
To have an appreciation of how to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.	
To be able to work with others to solve problems, or achieve results.	
To be able to work alone to achieve results or solve problems.	
To be keen to learn and know how to learn.	
To build resilience when facing challenges.	
To be able to express thoughts and feelings with confidence.	
To show respect for their own culture and history and that of others.	
To develop life skills.	
To be socially responsible and proactive.	
Please add other outcomes here ➢	

Addressing Barriers to Parental Involvement

A number of barriers common barriers to parental involvement have been highlighted by research. For example, Parentkind's (2018) Annual Parent Survey of 1500 parents found that the top five barriers to parental involvement were: time; parents not being sure of what skills knowledge they could offer; not being asked; finding the idea of getting involved intimidating and parents not knowing how they could get involved.

Schools are seeking to reduce the barriers to more inclusive parental involvement and the research and practice literature offers some signposts in terms of the main issues that need to be addressed.

Offering a range of ways to become involved is logical since we know that parents choose to be involved in a variety of different ways (Scottish Government, 2005). For example, parent governors, PTA, parent forums and parent councils may all attract different parents; and it may also be beneficial giving parents themselves the responsibility for building networks and gathering other parents' views. (National College for Learning in Schools and Children's Centres, 2010).

From the beginning schools need to take care that the way invitations to get parents involved are framed uses language that is positive and does not suggest that (some) parents do not 'play their part' (Scottish Government, 2005).

The benefits of parental involvement need to be promoted. When parents can see a direct positive impact on their own child they are more likely to participate in parental involvement activities (Scottish Government, 2005), and this, along with broader class, year, school and potentially cluster/MAT level benefits, could be outlined to parents.

Parents who 'match' the social or ethnic culture of a school are more likely to participate (Goodall, 2013; Kim, 2009). It has, therefore, been suggested schools should seek to ensure that parent committees and other parental involvement structures reflect the ethnicity of their communities wherever possible (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006). Parents may not identify with other parents on structures such as PTAs and School Boards, finding them too formal and closed or intimidating (Scottish Government, 2005). Where schools particularly want to reach underrepresented individual parents or groups of parents they may find that personal invitations to join structures such as PTAs can help and this in turn can enhance parents' feelings of their views being heard and valued (Campbell, 2011).

There has long been acknowledgement that the timing of school meetings and facilities available (e.g. crèches) can be a significant barrier to the active engagement of some parents and their non-attendance at school events should not be taken as a lack of engagement in their children's education (Vincent, 1996; Hughes, Wikeley, and Nash, 1994). Schools could think about more flexible ways to support parental involvement that fit around the working day and parents' other commitments (Scottish Government, 2005). For example, parents need not only be involved through meetings and events in school but may contribute to the school development plan or other forms of consultation and feedback more remotely (National College for School Leadership, 2011) and be involved in schools in a wider range of informal volunteer and support roles which may not directly relate to education.

Inclusion: Preparing and Supporting Parents for Parental Involvement

To promote inclusive parental involvement work, it is important to consider that some parents may require tailored approaches to support their involvement. Parental involvement is related to and dependent on parents' levels of communication, literacy and numeracy skills and schools might be encouraged to find ways to support this - through, for example, offering family learning opportunities and other support directly to parents as well as preparatory support for more formal aspects of parental involvement.

Schools may or may not feel comfortable with this kind of targeting but without it there is a risk that disadvantaged parents continue to be under-represented, for example on school fora and PTAs and other decision-making and strategic school structures. It has been noted elsewhere (e.g. Bagnall, Longhurst and Savage, 2003; Apps et al 2007) that middle class, more advantaged parents have tended to occupy these positions in schools and Children's Centres. This may become self-perpetuating in that it can make such groups seem less welcoming to parents from different backgrounds.

All of this work takes energy, commitment, resources and time - things often in short supply for school staff, especially senior leaders. There are other areas which could offer valuable insights. For example, often in work on children and families that crosses-disciplinary boundaries, the authors of this document have, as many others, noted opportunities for cross-learning between education and health services. The area of health services might offer some insights for parental involvement as extensive work has been undertaken to support a more equitable involvement of the public and ways to prepare and support service-users for involvement. This has especially

focused on equipping people with information and communication skills to facilitate and enable them to participate more fully in formal structures. For example, Northern Ireland's Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/)'s 2007 guidance focused on ways to support the public in order to achieve a number of aims including:

- increase ownership of services;
- help in priority setting and decision making;
- reduce perceived power imbalances;
- reduce complaints;
- increase levels of service satisfaction;
- acknowledge rights;
- increase levels of accountability;

All of these aspects might equally apply to - or be to some extent transferable/relatable to - the aims of parental involvement in schools and it is suggested that further exploration of this area could be made. Key agencies and organisations where information on supporting participation can be found include NHS England, Involve, NICE, and the King's Fund.

Suggested Measures

Theoretical assessment of the level of parental involvement appears rarely to be undertaken or considered. Therefore it is suggested that schools seek to measure success in parental involvement work in some of the following ways:

- Measures of PI that go beyond frequency/involved - not involved to consider satisfaction with involvement and issues such as perceived impact, power and worth of PI activities
- Assessment (by parents) of the level of involvement/participation of parents using established measures, e.g. adaptation of Hart's ladder of participation (see below)

Summary of success in this pillar

Table 4, below, summarises research and practice related to this pillar. When work related to this pillar is successful, schools will offer a range of informal and formal ways for parents to be involved in school life and make meaningful contributions that they, as well as schools, value. The diversity of the school community should be reflected in parental participation activities and steps taken to provide parents with support and skills to enable equal opportunities for all parents to become involved if they wish to.

Table 4: Summary of Research and Practice for Pillar 4: Parental Involvement in School Life

Strength of evidence	• Evidence is mainly **emerging**. • Parental involvement activities are likely to impact on educational outcomes in combination with other aspects of parental participation rather than in isolation. • Research suggests that many parents would like more involvement. • Most PI is by invitation so schools are in a strong position to influence.
Examples of suggested practice (what good practice could look like)	• Ensure that **parent committees are an accurate reflection of the social background and ethnicity** of the school community wherever possible. • Consider **targeting particular groups of parents/personal invitations** to encourage involvement of under-represented parents-e.g. on school fora and PTAs

	• **Support parents' levels of communication, literacy and numeracy skills** to facilitate their participation. • Consider exploring **resources developed for public involvement** elsewhere (e.g. health services) to reduce communication barriers and inequalities in involvement.
Key promising approaches and 'quick wins' for schools	• **Offering a range of ways** for parents to become involved-e.g. parent governors, PTA, parent forums and parent councils all attract different parents and parent groups. • **Considering a range of activities parents can be involved in** that are not dependent on high levels of literacy and communication skills-e.g. practical support for events and activities. • **Providing ways parents can be involved without having to come into the school**-e.g. consultation on key strategies online/remotely.
Gaps in the research/research issues	• There is a need for more research on **inclusive parental involvement**-for example, **qualitative work with parents on their views around parental involvement**, especially under-represented groups. • There is a need for more **research that includes a more in-depth analysis of parental involvement**-e.g. research that goes beyond looking at the simple frequency of involvement or whether parents are or are not involved and explores the nature of the involvement, along with parental *satisfaction* with it and its perceived *value* and *impact*. • More **research exploring how parental involvement influences schools' attitudes** to and/or knowledge of parents and their children could be useful.
Suggested measures of success	• **Measures of PI that go beyond frequency/involved-not involved** to consider **satisfaction with involvement** and issues such as **perceived impact, power and value of PI activities** in terms of building relationships with the school and supporting children's learning • **Assessment (by parents) of the level of involvement**/participation of parents using established measures-e.g. possible adaptation of Hart's ladder of participation (see conclusion and next steps for more detail)

8. Pillar 5: Community Engagement

Introduction

This pillar concerns ways in which schools can work with organisations and individuals in their communities to draw on specialist knowledge, skills, experience, service and resources in mutually beneficial ways to support parental participation and parents and children's educational, social, health and wellbeing needs more broadly.

School-community partnerships can provide important impacts both educationally and socially. For example, Goodhall and Vorhaus (2011) state:

> 'An evidence-based model [of community partnership] that looks to build relationships across the family, the school, and the community can improve outcomes for low-income and socially culturally marginalised families'.

An underpinning determinant of community engagement practice in the UK are Ofsted expectations. Whilst the requirement to report on the school's contribution to community

cohesion has been explicitly removed, it remains within the scope of a school's inspection alongside the requirement to ensure that the school is meeting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development needs of *all* pupils with the potential for this to be achieved, in part, through community connections.

Some schools engage in very wide range of parental participation activities that they consider community engagement. For example, in a survey of school leaders reported by Campbell (2011) schools listed the following activities as some examples of community-based parental participation work:

- invitations to events where children are performing or receiving awards outside school
- religious ceremonies (e.g. mass)
- local authority parent champion visits school to consult with parents
- SHARE project (this is ContinYou's family learning programme, see www.continyou.co.uk)
- links with the children's centre
- buddy system (parents from the community who are eager to come into school and bring in parents who want to come in but are not at ease or confident enough to come alone)
- theme days or weeks that involve external agencies that might encourage parental involvement
- community room where parents are invited to attend courses and workshops run by the school and external providers
- community week, where every child from nursery to Year 6 has the opportunity to have a visit out or a visitor in to enhance the curriculum
- community fun day
- visits to the local home for the elderly
- transition meetings between private day nurseries, high schools and further education colleges
- visits to the local university
- enterprise days
- engagement with city learning centres and media centres — use of high school sports facilities

Some beneficial community links may be more obvious than others. For example, for faith schools or those with communities of families from particular faith groups, links to religious institutions such as Sikh temples, or faith-based community groups are likely to be beneficial in making connections with parents, drawing on resources to support learning, and linking to important religious and cultural celebrations and events. Other types of partnership reported by schools as successful are links to parents or others who can act as "language ambassadors" and links to community leaders to connect with and support parents from specific linguistic, ethnic or religious groups (Parentkind [online] 2018).

Community work can also be considered outreach work with parents. The use of community workers, especially parent support workers from the local community, has been highlighted as helpful in making links with parents who might not feel confident or comfortable with engaging directly with the school on school grounds. Having a link to people in the community that parents know locally may provide another way of gaining trust and building relationships with parents (National College for Learning in Schools and Children's Services, 2010).

Family learning, where parents learn new skills, including those to support their children's learning, usually alongside them, can be school or community based and/or run. They may be based around gaining language (especially ESOL), literacy, and maths skills and/or parenting skills or other practical skills. Family learning programmes typically focus on informal, enjoyable ways of learning such as: quizzes and game-based learning; cooking; music making and song writing; storytelling; craft-based projects; film-making and photography; practical activities such as bicycle maintenance and simple DIY; and outdoor activities such as walking, canoeing and kayaking. Family learning activities can be effective in supporting families from disadvantaged backgrounds (Education Scotland, 2016). Five areas of the impact of family learning programmes were identified: learning new skills; increased confidence and understanding; improved communication; changed behaviours; and changed relationships with community and family. Family learning works best when it empowers families to take control of their own learning, recognises the unique contexts and cultural factors that impact on learning, uses a positive or strengths based model rather than a deficits one and is strategically planned, funded and delivered (NIACE, 2013). It is suggested that done well, and with sound evaluation, family learning can be shown to impact on parental participation and engagement, school attendance, absenteeism and children's attainment (Education Scotland, 2016).

With regard specifically to family literacy learning in schools, partnerships with local authorities and colleges/adult literacy tutors have been highlighted as not only beneficial but necessary for effective delivery and sustainability (NIACE, 2013). The idea of sustainability and sharing of resources for mutual benefit of the school and community partner is one of the compelling reasons for schools to engage strategically. There are also likely to be benefits of raising the profile and reputation of the school locally, which may impact on admissions, opportunities to positively impact on the community and promote social cohesion. In turn, the school as an asset in terms of facilities and buildings, staff and expertise and wide ranging reach to local families will be of interest to many community organisations.

Schools can and do make diverse links to serve their specific needs. Any links that serve to reach out to community partners, bring the home and school lives of children closer, support and extend 'core' school activities, provide enrichment experiences for children and their families or provide new support for their wellbeing are likely to be of value. Community resources and agencies also may be key to resolving a range of short and long term issues for schools that could encompass not just curriculum enrichment, careers guidance, ethnic and cultural awareness and sports and leisure activities but issues around behaviour and attendance. School leaders could regularly ask their staff "who in the community can support us with this?" in terms of a very wide range of issues they face – as well as consider ways that they can use community links to share positive news about and developments within the school with the community.

Positive impacts of community engagement

There have been a variety of different conceptualisations of schools as community facilities in the UK, most notably the extended schools initiative which was developed as part of the 2003 *Every Child Matters* programme initiated by the then Labour government. Extended schools provide a range of additional services and 'extend' the normal school day to provide sports, arts and other enrichment activities for children, adult learning and employment support, health and community activities, events and services including in some cases pre and post school 'wrap-around' and holiday childcare and make links with the community so that facilities and services can be shared and collaborative.

The government funding and requirement for providing extended schools ended in 2011 and since this time schools have been left to decide which aspects of services are viable to continue.

However, the evaluation of extended schools services, does provide some literature to draw on in terms of the benefits of wider collaboration with the community.

Evaluations of extended schools have found some evidence that they were associated with better behaviour and improved attainment, though difficulties in engaging with disadvantaged pupils and their families and making any specific impacts to narrow the gap in educational inequalities were noted (Department for Education, 2010; Education and Training Inspectorate, 2009).

In North America the model of community schools is broadly similar to extended schools and has the benefit of having been in operation for longer. Again, there is some moderate evidence of their benefits with community schools being linked to better family engagement with schools, and children's learning, school effectiveness and community vitality (CAS, 2011; Dryfoos et al, 2005; Blank et al, 2003 cited in CPAG, 2018), though causal studies of community schools are generally limited. It is suggested that more longitudinal research is required as causal effects are most likely to be visible in the long run (Heers et al, 2011; Cummings et al, 2007 cited in Webb and Healy, 2012).

More general literature on community-based learning suggests it may support home-school relationships (e.g. Feiler et al. 2006; Lamb-Parker et al. 2001; Mckay et al. 2003).

Models for community engagement

The research around the outcomes of extended schools and community engagement by schools in general is limited, and there is need for new, systematic and more robust research to address this gap and more governmental guidance on effective delivery of these programmes (Child Poverty Action Group, CPAG, 2018).

The literature on community engagement remains diverse, and is consequently challenging to organise thematically and strong evidence of impact and effective practice is scant. A further challenge in this area is the relationship between 'family' and community': - the former is rightly considered to be integrated within the latter but this renders identification of research and practice relating to community engagement, in its purest sense, difficult.

Even as extended schools, a relatively defined concept, there is no 'model' for how schools work with the community (CPAG, 2018). While to some extent this is necessary, to allow for wide variations in schools and the communities they are situated in, it nevertheless means each school has to find its own way in developing valuable community links. More research that develops and tests different models and approaches to community engagement is needed.

While the evidence base for school-community work around parental participation and educational outcomes evidence base is relatively sparse, as with parental involvement (pillar 4, above), there may be transferable knowledge to be gained from other areas.

For example, the evidence base around community schemes aiming to support public health is larger and appears to be more robust. For example, reviews of school-community based programmes targeting pupils' physical and mental health have some support. For example, a systematic review of literature relating to school-based interventions targeting adolescent (health) behaviours concluded that parental and community involvement were positively associated with positive changes in student behaviours (Busch et al., 2013).

Therefore, further work exploring transferable knowledge from this field could be useful.

Community engagement addressing poverty and disadvantage

How schools might best serve the needs of the children and families on their roll and their communities is ever more pressing with a landscape of increasing poverty and inequality for the UK's children. In line with this, the potential for schools to link with vital support services in the community, in particular those which address food insecurity, such as food banks, has been highlighted (CPAG 2018). Poverty impacts on families in a number of well documented ways that are detrimental to parenting and impact on parental involvement in education (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007 p.32). At the most fundamental level, in areas of deprivation and with families in disadvantaged situations, immediate welfare concerns such as food insecurity will need to be addressed before there can be any hope of parental participation work. Heads and teaching staff often know this only too well and can be closely involved with addressing social and welfare problems of the families they work with on a daily basis (Apps, Ashby and Bauman, 2007).

Schools could consider extending existing services as well as developing new links with the community. For example, existing services aimed at tackling disadvantage such as breakfast clubs which are now funded through a variety of self-funding, national, local and voluntary/charitable sources in England (while funded by the government in Wales since 2004) could be extended to include families and/or the community through collaboration with outside organisations such as Food banks.

Factors supporting community engagement

While the research literature to draw on is sparse - in inverse proportion to the wide amount of community-based work which schools actually undertake - there are school case studies and a number of small scale research studies from other countries where community schools have been embedded for much longer which provide some tentative, general ideas. For example work from North America (Gross et al 2015) suggests successful community partnerships require:

- strong leadership
- an inviting school culture
- an educator commitment to student success and
- the ability to collaborate and communicate with partners.

Joyce Epstein's work, which continues to dominate the American parental and community involvement landscape, makes the recommendation that schools should:

- Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development
- Provide information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs and services (Epstein, 2018)

As with all areas of parental engagement the interest and commitment to community engagement needs to come from senior leadership staff and be embedded into school strategy documents. For example, it is suggested that like parental engagement, community engagement should be embedded into staff recruitment/selection and is in all job descriptions. (National College, 2010).

Contemporary Practice Case Study:

Since being appointed in 2010 the head teacher of Rhyl High School has led the school to develop its strategic partnership working in order to enrich the curriculum, with the additional aim of helping to address behavioural issues and re-engage disengaged learners. The school's external partners include youth organisations, Rhyl Football Club, Communities First and the local army

camp. Disengaged learners work with learning coaches to pick subjects to study consisting of the normal curriculum but also including additional choices delivered by the external partners, such as gardening, sport in the community, public services and digital media. Key Stage 3 learners also benefit from the enriched curriculum. Attainment and attendance have improved, exclusions fallen and learners have become more engaged and confident about their futures.

(Welsh Government, 2016)

Suggested measures

- Qualitative feedback from community partners (including parents) on the nature of engagement experiences and benefits gained regarding relationships with the school and supporting children's learning

Summary of success in this pillar

Table 5, below, summarises research and practice related to this pillar. Successful work in this pillar would see schools engaging strategically in a range of contacts that enhance and sustain the activities they can offer children and parents and serve to develop stronger relationships with their communities of parents, and more generally. Schools working well in this area will respond to a wide range of their children and parents' educational, social and health needs through community links with statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations and individuals; and in turn provide a community asset that attracts community organisations to work in collaboration with them.

Table 5: Summary of Research and Practice for Pillar 5: Community Engagement

Strength of evidence	• Evidence is mainly **emerging**. Some **moderate** to **good** evidence surrounding large, national initiatives such as the Community School Model (US, NI) and Extended Schools (England and Wales), which include/d community engagement. • Community engagement is recommended in practice-based literature and guidance documents.
Examples of suggested practice (what good practice could look like)	• School has a clear **strategy and commitment to community engagement.** • **Building relationship-driven links with other community assets/organisations.** • **Developing an awareness of the diversity of the school community**-e.g. multicultural diversity. • Considering the **school as a community asset and not just an educational establishment.** • **Partnering with community organisations to meet the personal, social and physical needs** of the children-e.g. parenting classes, afterschool clubs and childcare, foodbanks.
Key promising approaches and 'quick wins' for schools	• **Partnerships with local authorities and FE colleges** to support adult education. • **Outreach courses run at school by community organisations**. • Joint **events run with community sports or arts groups** • Facilitating **access to language ambassadors** and community leaders • **Signposting parents** to community health, cultural, social support, and recreational services.

Gaps in the research/research issues	• More robust research linking **specific community engagement practices to educational outcomes** is needed. • Research studies would benefit from more careful consideration to **separate parental engagement from community engagement**. • The **evaluation of community engagement work can be complex** because of the many variables involved.
Suggested measures of success	• **Qualitative feedback from community partners** (including parents) on the nature of engagement experiences and benefits gained regarding relationships with the school and supporting children's learning

9. Conclusions and Next Steps for the Framework

This report has detailed a rapid review of research and practice literature related to Parentkind's proposed parental participation framework. It draws together research around the five pillars of the framework with the aim of identifying practical steps schools might take to support parental participation, wherever possible.

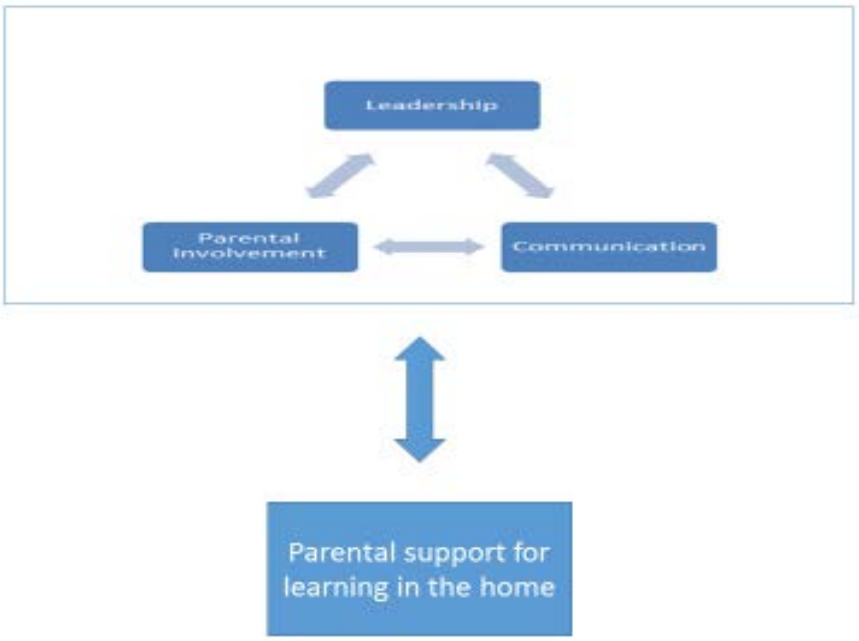
The five pillars of the framework are all based on evidence from the literature but vary by the range of concepts and activities they cover; how clearly these have each been defined in the research and practice literature; the strength of the evidence linking them to parental participation and through this (or other routes) to children's educational outcomes; and the strength of evidence that schools can impact on these.

While the pillars have been presented separately for clarity, most overlap or are closely linked to each other. Some pillars are likely to underpin others-for example, strong leadership and effective, two-way communication are likely to be necessary for all parental participation work.

From an evidence perspective, in terms of impact on children's attainment, the strongest pillar is pillar 3, 'Learning at Home' and we recommend that this pillar is given a higher level of priority in the framework. Additionally, where further investment can be made in research it is recommended that it is made first in what schools can do to support learning at home.

Other pillars may be more usefully integrated into the framework by considering their relationships with each other. For example, pillars 1, 2 and 4- Leadership, Ethos and Resources, Effective Two-Way Communication, and Parent involvement in School Life might be considered a 'system' of factors that could, hypothetically, influence each other and, collectively, influence support for home learning-see diagram below. For example, good leadership has the potential to lead to better communication, and better communication might at the same time improve leadership because staff are better informed about families. In turn, better parental involvement might lead to better communication because parents' voice and different needs are heard, and better communication might lead to better parental involvement through school providing more effective invitations or information to parents.

Figure 1: Possible relationship between pillars 1-4



Another way of thinking about the framework could be that pillars 3 and 4 (Home Learning and Parental Involvement) are what parents are doing, and how they are participating, whilst pillars 1,2,5 are enablers to make this happen.

These are just a few configurations the framework might take and represent the authors' views. It is recommended that consideration is given to reformulating/refining the framework so that the pillars are not 'equally weighted' and that their relationships with each other and overlaps are considered more fully. The overall aim of developing the framework is to provide schools, policy makers and other stakeholders with a useful tool to facilitate discussion around, work in, and evaluation of, parental participation activities. Therefore, it will be important that the framework is taken forward and shaped by those who are likely to use it – to ensure it is applicable and practical to use.

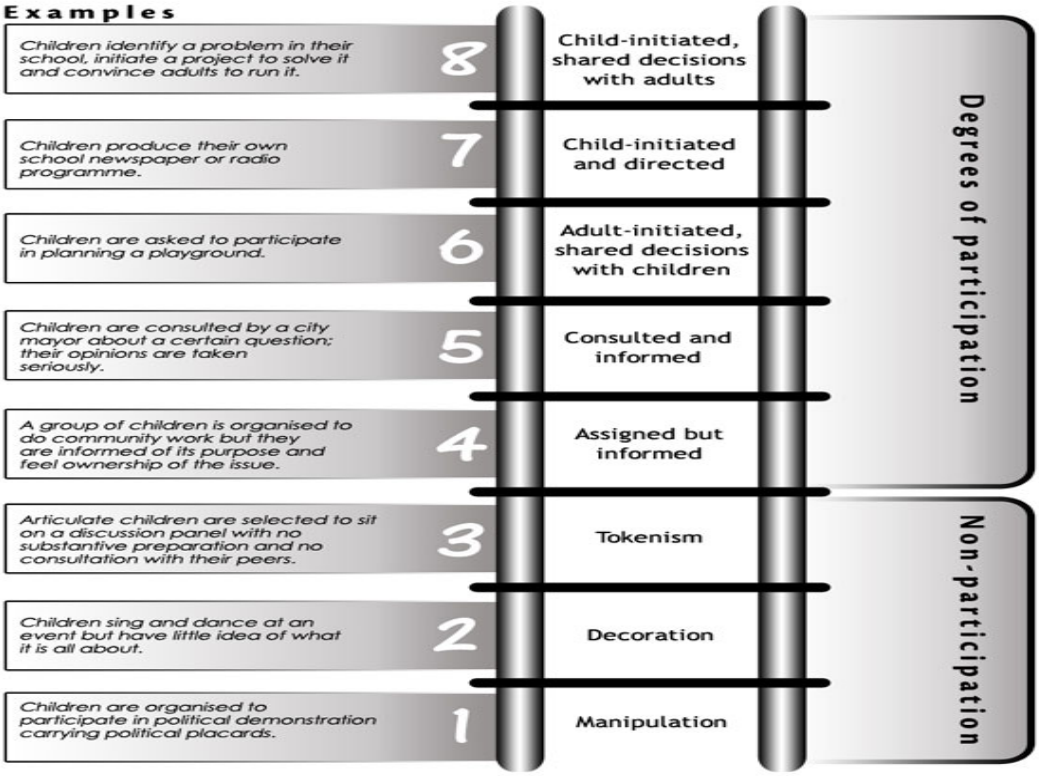
A range of research gaps have been identified in this review and the research evidence base it has drawn from. While all of these gaps reduce our ability to understand parental participation, and what schools can do to support this more fully, some particularly restrict our knowledge of this area. Perhaps most central, is research which explores in depth-and ideally longitudinally-parents' views on parental participation and particularly home learning in a *qualitative* way. There have been and continue to be cross-sectional surveys which ask parents mainly quantitative, closed questions on levels of parental engagement and a small number of mainly quantitative, longitudinal cohort studies that include questions on parental engagement. What is lacking is an in-depth study or studies which provide a holistic, parental perspective on parental participation which might give insights into questions such as:

- What motivates parents to become more involved in their children's education and schools? What are the turning points?
- What does home learning really look like from parents and children's perspectives, and over time?
- How does the relationship between parents and schools develop over time and what factors influence its ebbs and flows?

Research of this kind can be challenging and resource-intensive but could yield key information for working with parents.

In terms of thinking about an overall measure of success that schools might use for parental participation work across the whole framework, the area of children's participation in service development might provide useful insights. Research, theory and practice in children's participation deals with power imbalances between children and adult professionals. These power imbalances are naturally more exaggerated than those between parents and teachers but a number of similarities might be drawn and the development of tools of assessment might prove a useful starting point. There are a number of ways in which children's participation in services has been assessed. One old but well used classification is Hart's (1992) Ladder of participation which considers the true extent to which participation in a service or service development is led and initiated by children or young people. The figure below show's Hart's ladder of 7 types of participation and on the left examples of the types of activities that might be classified at each level:

Figure 2: Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation



Similar consideration of parental participation activities might be made through the adaptation of Hart's ladder (beginning by substituting 'parents' for 'children' and 'schools' for 'adults') -or other tools by which participation is assessed.

As discussed, the area of parental participation lacks a strong theoretical basis (Goodall, 2018), which can make it difficult to learn from successful work, identify the 'active ingredients' and transfer these from one setting to another. The literature is diverse, extensive and there is not always a common language or understanding of parental participation practices to assist stakeholders in discussing, planning and evaluating work in this area. Parentkind's parent participation framework is an attempt to address some of these issues and it is hoped that the collation of research in the participation framework and future work derived from this may go some way to taking this forward and supporting schools in their work with parents.

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11. Appendix 1: Parental participation toolkits and resources

There are a number of resources developed for and used by schools, both to use directly with parents and to use to review, monitor or evaluate their work with parents. There is at present little available research to suggest which materials are most effective to use with parents (though key elements of good communication-see pillar 2 -will apply). The following are some examples of practice and some organisations which provide resources in specific areas.

Working presumably from the premise that parents need to know the importance of parental participation to become more engaged, some schools produce documents to make explicit their values around parental participation. For example, Lime Farm Junior School (2019) produced a downloadable document for parents and teachers explaining their approach to parental participation, in this case the importance of respect, responsibility and relationships

(http://www.limesfarmjuniorschool.co.uk/cms_media/files/school_parent_partnership1.pdf?static=1)

Others, such as the Hampshire School Chelsea, have linked to easy read digests of research (https://www.thehampshireschoolchelsea.co.uk/userfiles/files/For%20Parents/Parental%20Engagement/The-Impact-of-Parental-Engagement-on-Learner-Success613583.pdf) to explain to parents and teachers what parental engagement is and why it is important.

These approaches might not be suitable for all schools and depend on levels of literacy of parents but show ways in which schools are making parental participation work explicit to parents and really spelling out its importance along with embedding it in practice.

A variety of documents, toolkits and approaches for schools to develop and monitor their parental participation work are available from national organisations working in the fields of education and parental participation. For example:

- Parentkind has developed a range of parental participation guidance documents and links to resources for schools. https://www.parentkind.org.uk/For-Schools/Resources
- The Harvard Family Research project (2018) has produced tips for parent-teacher consultations https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Parent-Teacher-Conferences-Strategies-for-Principals-Teachers-and Parents?utm_source=Parent+Teacher+Conference+Tip+Sheet&utm_campaign=Parent+Teacher+Conference+Tip+Sheet&utm_medium=email)
- Education Scotland (2017) Engaging Parents and Families a Toolkit for Practitioners https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/Engaging%20parents%20and%20families:%20A%20toolkit%20for%20practitioners
- The Welsh Government (2016). FaCE the challenge together: Family and community engagement toolkit for schools in Wales Main guidance http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/160712-face-toolkit-main-en.pdf
- The Education Endowment Foundation (N.D) Review of trials-based evidence around parental participation.https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/parental-engagement/
- Nfer (2013). Teacher Guide: Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/OUPP02/OUPP02.pdf
- School-Home Support Services UK (2015). Parental Engagement : A training toolkit of resources for supporting parents with complex needs. https://www.schoolhomesupport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SHS-Parental-engagement-toolkit.pdf
- Burnage (2017). Parental engagement: some ideas and approaches-a blog with ideas to support parental participation in secondary schools http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/parental-engagement-some-ideas-and-approaches/
- National College for School Leadership (2011). Simple tools for schools wanting to audit their work with parents https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10430/1/download%3Fid=153641&filename=leading-and-developing-parental-engagement-improving-your-own-practice.pdf