



Together 
for Families

Parent Carer Engagement Framework

key points for parents

In partnership with



Foreword

Cornwall Council recognises that parent carers and families are the most important influences in a child's life. Parental involvement and engagement in early learning and school influences a pupil's achievement and wellbeing.

Our vision is that:

- All parent carers and families will be warmly welcomed within our schools. They will be encouraged to play an important role within the school community.
- Parent carers will be supported and encouraged to become actively engaged in their child's learning and development, both in school and at home, providing consistency of approach to enable our young people to achieve.
- Cornwall Council is committed to enhancing existing partnerships with parent carers and families and establishing clear routes of communication. This will allow schools to maintain an ongoing dialogue with families about their children's learning, report on progress being made and reflect together.

Kate Evans-Hughes

Strategic Director - Together for Families

The Parent Carer Forum believe that this is an important Framework. We know the best outcomes for a child/young person can be achieved when families and schools work together.

Parental engagement with a child/young person's learning is supported to its fullest when communication is a two-way process

Every child and young person matters. Once this Framework is integrated into a whole school approach it will build strong positive relationships between school and home.

We fully support and welcome the development of the Framework.

Kay Henry

Chair of Cornwall Parent Carers Forum

The importance of parental engagement

Parental engagement in children's learning makes a difference – it is the most powerful school improvement lever we have.

Harris and Goodall (2007)

All children, young people and families in Cornwall are entitled to world class education that helps them to achieve the best possible outcomes at every stage of learning.

Cornwall Council (2021)

Parental engagement focuses on ways in which parent carers and families support and encourage their children's learning in school and in everyday life. Schools and partners can play a vital role in supporting families to do this effectively and with confidence.

The Scottish Government (2017)




The seven principles

There are seven principles in this framework. We have pulled out the key points of each one so that parent carers can understand how schools across Cornwall will be working with them to create a strong and meaningful engagement.



Principle 1:

A whole school approach

 A whole school approach means that parent carer engagement is embedded throughout the school. Best practice is where schools have a parent carer engagement policy and practices in their own right which are directly linked to the teaching and learning policy.

- Lead and embed a whole-school approach to parent carer engagement reflected in the values of the setting and a commitment to developing staff capacity through professional development.
- The school improvement plan identifies key areas in which parent carers and the wider community can become involved. This is communicated as a priority for the school to governors, school staff, families and other stakeholders.
- The school will develop a policy for parent carer engagement which is embedded across all aspects of teaching and learning. Parent carers are involved in co- developing and reviewing the school's policies and procedures which relate to parent carer engagement.
- The school understands the needs of parent carers and the local community and develops ways of working which are supportive and inclusive. They ensure that parent carers are supported to be fully involved in the life and learning of their child.
- Schools develop different approaches to parent carer engagement and have a plan for how they will work with families with more complex needs based on a universal, targeted and specialist approach.



Principle 2:

A welcoming school: our culture, attitudes and approach

Welcoming families to engage with the school and fostering the development of mutual trust and respect between school and families, is the foundation from which the school can then go on to help families to actively support their child's learning.

- The school buildings and environment are welcoming, safe, and appropriate for learning and engagement.
- Parent carers can rely on a warm and friendly reception whenever they telephone or visit the school. Steps are taken to get to know the families, which include at induction and key transition points.
- Teachers and parent carers treat each other with mutual respect and where differing views and opinions arise they are considered and discussed with a view to finding solutions.
- Activities, events and initiatives to increase parent carer involvement and support engagement with their child's learning, are a regular part of the school's calendar.
- Schools act on the principle that all parent carers want the best for their children. No parent carers as unreachable.



Principle 3:

Communication

Every school must have clear lines of communication meeting the needs of their wider community and forming the basis of a two-way relationship between the school and its families. Communications are effective, clear, timely and handled with both professionalism and consideration. Parent carers know that their opinions and needs are taken seriously, and that they can communicate with the school confident that they will be listened to, responded to appropriately and supported to a conclusion which satisfies both parties.

- The school values reflect the importance of parent carer engagement establishing a strong base for parent/carer engagement in their child's learning journey.
- The school has a friendly, welcoming environment for parent carers. Parent carers are encouraged to participate in and contribute to their child's learning.
- The school should establish clear communication channels between parent carers and school staff.
 - Parent carers know by name who they can approach with questions or concerns.
 - These are responded to swiftly, professionally and with courtesy. Equally questions/concerns are welcomed/respected.
 - The complaint process is clear, easily accessible for parent carers and adhered to by the school.



- The school sets routines and practices which maintain good communication with parent carers, including regular timetabled opportunities to speak with class teachers (or SENDco where appropriate); regular timetabled opportunities to engage with their child's learning (open afternoons, assemblies, presentations); confidential advice/training in specific areas of their child's learning e.g. phonics; behavioural strategies; careers/work experience; exam choice.
- The school creates opportunities for parent carers to share important aspects of their culture, needs, experiences and expectations.
- The setting maintains a high standard of two-way communication with parent carers through an understanding of their individual needs/circumstances. Including (but not exclusively):
 - scheduling meetings and activities to match varying parent carer schedules;
 - providing incentives to encourage attendance at-school meetings and events;
 - providing alternative ways to access information and communicate with school staff, aside from attending meetings and activities on school grounds;
 - provide opportunities for parent carers to get to know about the school and school staff in non-threatening ways.
- The setting embeds a culture of excellence in its communications with parent carers through the implementation of programs that are:
 - culturally sensitive and that reflect the social and environmental aspects of a community influenced by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, locale (rural, suburban, urban), and culture;
 - providing translation services for non-English-speaking parent carers; making every effort to reduce barriers to understanding information e.g. removing jargon.
 - providing continuous personal development opportunities for school staff that focus on strengthening parent engagement.



Principle 4:

Support for learning

Schools clearly focus on working with parent carers as partners in their child's learning. They must ensure there is a common understanding of both school demands and family needs, as well as how the nature of support for learning changes as the child gets older. When support for learning takes place, it is essential that positive outcomes are shared and celebrated.

- There are three main ways parent carers can get involved in supporting children and young people's learning: These are:
 - Learning at home: Schools recognise that parent carers are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and help them develop their child's learning at home, in the community and at school.
 - Home/School partnership: Schools are open to the involvement of parent carers in the work they do. They consider ways of providing information that helps families engage with school and their children's education.
 - Where appropriate, parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on policy matters affecting the education of their children.

This may include parent carer forums, representation on governing bodies, etc. where representatives of the community are enabled to positively represent their group, working proactively and reactively to meet need.

- Effective two-way conversations ensure that the school has a good understanding of what parent carers want and need for a successful partnership working to be established. **This is particularly important for parent carers of children with SEND and/or barriers to learning.**



- Schools ensure that parent carers understand that the level and type of support for learning changes as their child grows. They provide support and guidance to parent carers to understand these changes and how to deliver the most effective support for learning depending on the age, maturity and needs of the learner.
- Parent carer engagement supports all aspects of the child’s learning and development.
- Schools provide resources and guidance around the most effective ways to support children and young people to learn, dependent on their age, maturity and learning needs.
- The school takes care to ensure that parent carers understand the progress their child is making, and how this assessed. They regularly discuss actions that the school and parent carers will take to support progress.
- Schools promote “lifelong learning” and provide opportunities for parent carers to build their own knowledge, skills and understanding of key concepts within subjects and how children learn. Formats will differ, but this may include:
 - providing collaborative learning experiences where parent carers are given the opportunity to learn alongside their child (family learning);
 - providing support through the sharing of subject policies (e.g. calculation policies in maths); generic guidance and resources (e.g. how to best support reading comprehension or to learn spellings);
 - providing subject specific “refresher” workshops (e.g. to boost literacy, numeracy or digital skills); or collaboration with/ signposting to adult learning providers.
- Parent carers are enabled to join in the celebration of success in learning, e.g. through open days and sharing assemblies.



Principle 5:

Community matters

Effective settings provide parent carers with a supportive learning and education community in which to thrive and grow. The school should aspire to provide parent carers with a sense of belonging to a shared set of community values, interests and attitudes.

- As part of a child's enrolment, the setting should also use this as an opportunity to invite parent carers in the wider school community.
- The setting may consider a parent carer ambassador to foster and facilitate the sense of community.
- The setting maintains a network of professionals that provide tailored support. All staff are confident in this multi-agency offer and can share this with families and referrals are made appropriately.



Principle 6:

Raising and realising aspiration

Aspiration means; the things children/young people hope to achieve for themselves in the future; this could include skills, hobbies and interests in addition to any career goals. When referring to a ‘career’ we mean an individual’s “journey” through learning, work and areas of their life that provide meaning and fulfilment. Schools should seek to widen the range of options and opportunities that learners and their families see as achievable.

- Settings can broaden horizons by showing children and their families a wide range of possible careers. Language should be carefully chosen with definitions provided for key words and jargon avoided. Real life interactions with working people will inspire pupils and parent carers. Parent carers with different careers may be willing to be volunteers. Also, through an alumni network could be developed.
- Staff make links between aspirations and outcomes for children and include this in their communication with parent carers. Teachers illustrate real life outcomes for the activities, skills, knowledge and behaviours that children learn in the classroom. Research skills, decision-making, communication, managing change and confidence are all valued within the curriculum.



Principle 7:

Addressing the barriers to parental engagement

 Schools will be able to identify and put in place strategies to support diverse and inclusive ways to bridge complex barriers.

- Schools/colleges should have a clear process and evaluation in place to understand barriers to parent carer engagement. Through the evaluation process, they ascertain the personal experiences of the parent carers and build on the positive and address any negative experiences. The evaluation process will provide an evidenced-based approach to engagement.
- Teachers should be supported with appropriate training and support to enable them to better understand the needs of parent carers. Staff should develop a relationship with the parent/family at enrolment.
- The buildings and environment should be made welcoming, safe, and appropriate for learning and engagement. Parent carers and children/young people should participate in a consultation in this process.



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