



## What is parental engagement?

Parental engagement describes the involvement of parents in supporting their child's academic learning. In education it refers to teachers and schools including and working with parents in their child's learning. This may include interventions or projects where the objective is to develop a parent's skills, encourage parents in supporting their child's learning journey in the home or learning opportunities/activities where parent and child work together. Parental engagement differs from parental involvement as, simply put; parental engagement is about schools **listening to parents** and working with them whereas involvement is more about schools **talking to parents** and telling them what they should be doing.

We have used the term 'parents' throughout for simplicity. 'Parents' should be read as indicating all forms of parental responsibility, including that of carers.

## Why is clear and strong parental engagement important to SHINE?

Like schools, SHINE knows that parental engagement has a large and positive impact on a child's learning. It is therefore a priority for any project to be effective in parental engagement, particularly for those parents who are not already actively involved in their child's education. Involving parents in their child's education removes barriers to learning and improves attitudes and behaviour at school. The more engaged parents are in the education of their child the more likely their child is to succeed academically.

For any project that relies heavily on parental engagement to reach its outcomes, SHINE seeks assurances that the plan outlined in the application will be achievable.

Parental engagement can refer to any meaningful engagement by a parent in their child's education, including engagement

in home learning, attending school-led sessions or being able to encourage and support their child. This can include, but is not limited to, projects where parents are invited into school to engage with sessions alongside their child, projects where there is a high emphasis on the home learning environment or projects which see parents as partners in delivering an intervention. We understand that if parents don't engage with an intervention it is unlikely the project will have the desired educational outcomes and impact.





## What does the guidance and research say about good parental engagement?

There is a well-established body of evidence that illustrates the powerful impact parental engagement has on a child's education, aspirations and, ultimately, on their outcomes. The effect is greater than schooling itself and there are very few factors that have more impact, and which are open to our influence ([United Learning, 2003](#)). There are also indications that, although parental engagement evolves and changes with a child's age, it is never too late for a child to benefit from a parent's engagement in their education.

Parental engagement in a child's education is repeatedly found to be one of the most effective ways to improve outcomes for children. The most recent studies undertaken in England summarise this clearly: "The more parents are engaged in the education of their child, the more likely their child is to succeed in their education. School improvement and school effectiveness research shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement. Schools that improve and sustain improvement engage the whole community and build strong links with parents." ([Department for Education, 2011](#)).

The evidence indicates that a parental engagement strategy should be outward facing, meaning it involves not only the views of parents but also the evidence and knowledge of other schools and community services. The understanding and sharing of knowledge should be a two-way process, from school to home and home to school. There is evidence that suggests any interventions should be informed by ongoing parental-needs assessments so that parents feel heard, and that the intervention is beneficial for both them and their child.

The intervention should centre around clear and consistent goals related to the improvement of a child's learning and raising attainment and should be clearly communicated with all involved in the activities.

To ensure effective parental engagement, staff may benefit from training and support to develop their confidence, understanding of those from different backgrounds, and what will work best to engage parents in their setting. This should also identify and value the way in which parents are already engaged in their child's education.

Arguably one of the most important factors in developing a strong parental engagement plan is that it should consider the barriers to engagement that a school's community of parents might face. Schools should seek to understand what those barriers are (For example, cost, time, transport, technology, confidence, parent's own school experiences, resources, etc) and find solutions that mean all parents are able to engage with an intervention.



## What might this look like in practice?

An application should detail clearly how parents have and will be involved in the project. It should include any previous experience a school has had in engaging parents in a child's learning that have supported the improvement in a child's outcomes.

Questions to consider around parental engagement when completing your SHINE application include:

- ◆ Is it clear through the application that parents are aware of the project and how they would be involved?
- ◆ Have parents been involved in the design of the project?
- ◆ Will parents be involved in any advisory capacity during the project years?
- ◆ Will parents be involved in the delivery of the project?
- ◆ What is the school's previous track record of working with parents? Is it clear that the school has relevant experience and success in engaging the targeted families?
- ◆ How do parents usually engage with school activities?
- ◆ Does the school understand the barriers to engagement and the needs of families (specifically those who may not already be engaging)? Has the school identified ways to meet these needs?
- ◆ Does the application detail ways of working with parents that are supportive and inclusive? Has the application clearly detailed plans and ideas of how to encourage parents to get involved in their child's learning?



## Useful reading

[Department for Education, Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement](#)

[EEF, Parental engagement](#)

[National Association of School Business Managers, Engaging Parents & Stakeholders to Improve Your School](#)

[Getting Smart, 10 Strategies for Schools to Improve Parent Engagement](#)

[School-Home Support Services UK, Parental Engagement Toolkit](#)

[EEF, Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning Guidance Report](#)

[United Learning, Effective Parental Engagement](#)

[Harris & Goodall - University of Warwick, Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement. Do Parents know they Matter?](#)