

Why engage parents?

Research evidence shows that children's progress at school can be accelerated by parental involvement in their child's education.

Key findings of a study by Douglas, J.W.B.¹, found that:

- Children whose parents showed a high level of interest had higher test score at 8 and 11
- The scores of those children whose parents showed little interest deteriorated
- The children with interested parents accelerated in comparison to those that had disengaged parents whatever their initial starting point

Encouraging a close link between parents and schools has many potential benefits

For Schools

- Increased communication between school and parent
- Increased parental engagement in school
- Strengthened relationships between parents and schools
- Positive changes in school's support of children's learning in partnership with parents

For Parents

- More confident about supporting child's learning
- More motivated to support child's learning
- More proactive in creating opportunities to support the child's learning outside of school
- Communicate more with their child
- Better understanding of child's learning
- Development of relevant parental skills to support child's learning

For Children

- Improved motivation to learn
- Improvements in communication and enquiry skills
- Broadening understanding of Worldviews and values in relation to everyday practice

Recognised good practice in parental engagement

The National Foundation for Education Research² demonstrates that parental engagement practice is most successful when schools:

- Evaluate the success of their parental engagement strategies
- Use a whole school approach
- Prioritise communication
- Maximise choice, minimise barriers
- Provide advice, emotional support and training to enable positive parenting
- Work with others

1 Douglas, J.W.B (1964). The Home and School: A study of ability and attainment in the primary schools

2 Aston, H and Grayson, H (2013). Teacher Guide: Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children. National Foundation for Education Research

Insight into how this project connects with the Worldviews Approach

Three types of knowledge

- 1 One approach is to start with the **Personal Knowledge** about the key ideas relating to RE.
This should be in relation to ‘big’ **questions** – things that *matter* to pupils.
- 2 Then through enquiry to explore how **others** respond to that question.
This is the **Substantive Knowledge**.
- 3 These need to be **structured** in a way that develops pupils **Ways of Knowing** skills.
So that by the end of the enquiry, they cannot just recall **what** *others* believe or do but can explain **why** they do.

The last part of the enquiry should be about applying the same ideas to their own responses – **reflecting** and **understanding** *how* they came to their worldview. By the end, pupils should be able to explain the **meaning** of these ‘big’ questions.

Getting the Qs right

Often, we see questions that are showing substantive basics, e.g. ‘What are the holy books of...’

- First: It has placed the **substantive** in the centre.
 - Second: It assumes that ‘**holy**’ means the same to all.
 - Third: Not everyone can access this, as not all religions have holy books at the centre.
- 1 *All* worldviews are asking the ‘big’ questions about life – the **thinking**. So, rather than picking up a substantive fact and trying to compare this practice alone, it should be in relation to a wider thinking question. For example, rather than comparing places of worship, surely a bigger concept is ‘why worship?’
 - 2 Take into account **how** beliefs about a big concept are shown **through** the ways people live i.e. their practices, OR how beliefs may have **changed** by **when** and **where** they live?
 - 3 If we get that right, then pupils can be comparing these big ideas with their own worldviews. So if not religious, they can still use their Personal Knowledge to appreciate what worship is, how it is practiced in lives of others and reflects their beliefs.

This is why *this* project starts with the Personal Knowledge or worldviews for big concepts or ideas and explores how these might be expressed through symbols.

Top Tips for recruiting parents

1 Get the whole school excited

Inform all school staff that the project is running and that you are looking for support to encourage parents to sign up. Everyone can be part of sharing the opportunity with parents. You could run a mock object-oriented workshop at a staff meeting so that all staff can share the experience when talking to parents.

2 What has worked well before?

Build on what you have done in the past to engage parents, using existing channels of communication such as social media and emails.

3 Work closely with staff who have an established relationship with parents

Ask them to support recruitment by making phone calls, speaking to them during drop off and pick up times. Involve reception / office staff, have a display in reception and ask them to support with enquiries.

4 Face to face and direct invitations work best

Think about how you will present the opportunity, use the supporting material but also think about why a parent would want to get involved. Highlight the benefits such as one-to-one time with their child, supporting their child's learning and engagement, supporting the practice of skills such as investigation, enquiry and communication.

5 Get creative

Think about creative ways to engage such as publicising the opportunity at PTA events, or a 'Taster Table' at parents evening or in the playground at 'Pick up time'.

6 Set up a coffee morning or display at a school event

You could run simulations, consultations about what parents enjoy doing with their children in the home and connect these activities with those, and show the online video where they can hear what other parents say: www.faithbeliefforum.org/programme/identityunboxed

7 Keep all messaging short, clear and concise

Focus on what the project is, who it is for, what the benefits are (connecting with the curriculum and in-school learning), and what is expected (time and activity).