

4 Engaging with students' parents and guardians

If your students' parents are to work closely with you to help the school succeed, you need to communicate regularly with them and provide openings for them to communicate with you. This may be in the form of meetings, informally at the school gate or on an individual basis regarding specific students.

Once you have this open communication, you can share issues and seek help with solutions, just as Mrs Chandra did in the following case study.

Case Study 4: Mrs Chandra's security solution

Mrs Chandra's school had not had any repairs or maintenance for some time. Recently the boundary wall had broken and fallen down, leaving the whole school site insecure. Although it was in a very poor area, she enjoyed the support of her students' parents and the students came to school willingly and regularly. In one of the parents' meetings she mentioned the problem about the wall and was delighted when two brothers, who both had children enrolled in the school, offered to organise a working party to repair the wall. They also suggested using some of the older students to help. While this was being organised and the funding sought for materials, the brothers got together several of the fathers and uncles of other students to take turns to help guard the school at night.

Mrs Chandra had spent a great deal of time with the parents since coming to the school, encouraging them to feel that the school was theirs and that the success of their children depended on them to a large extent. She encouraged a widespread pride in the school among all parents. She felt that this kind offer to help was a direct result of the mutual respect she shared with her students' parents.

Activity 9: Make a plan for engaging with parents

Go back to the school's engagement with parents - audit that you did in Activity 7 and identify where you could make progress in parent engagement. In your Learning Diary, make a plan (possibly involving your deputy, if you have one) about what you can do next term and then in the longer term.

Set yourself a few easy targets for improving engagement with parents and guardians in your school. For each activity or target you set, be sure to indicate the benefit that this will bring to the school and student learning.

Discussion

You may already do a number of things to involve parents in your school – but there will probably be more initiatives you could take, such as:

- hosting a discussion about homework policy
- getting the students to conduct a survey about their parents' views
- sending success postcards home
- holding an 'open house' once a month after school for parents to talk to specific teachers.

You do not need to do everything at once, but you will find that once you start these conversations with parents, more will follow, and your students will feel direct benefits from the joined-up approach.