



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Response to the Estyn thematic report on
involving parents: Communication between schools
and parents of school-aged children**

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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Report title:

Involving parents: Communication between schools and parents of school-aged children.

Report details:

The report was commissioned by the Welsh Government's Education Directorate to understand more about the preferred communication routes of parents and how schools are trying to improve their existing lines of communication.

The report reviews how effectively schools communicate with the parents of school-aged children and explores parents' views of the approaches taken by schools. It also includes case studies of notable and innovative practice observed by inspectors.

Summary of Main Findings:

Almost all schools establish useful relationships with a wide range of partners and many schools are adopting an increasingly wide range of strategies to communicate with parents. Only a few schools actively consult with parents to identify their preferred methods of communication.

The majority of schools now use text messaging and social media platforms to send parents information about school events. Some use digital channels (usually 'apps') to develop valuable two way dialogue with the school. Parents of primary school children receive considerably more communication from their child's school than parents of children and young people in secondary schools.

Too often schools communicate exclusively with mothers and this can inadvertently exclude fathers. Only a few schools have adopted successful strategies to that encourage fathers to engage more closely in their child's education.

Schools in general have been able to access little external support for their engagement practices - in particular, how to set up and manage their social media accounts. This has resulted in schools not knowing how to use these and other digital platforms and also not having clear protocols in place to protect the wellbeing of staff and pupils using them.

Parents prefer receiving communication which addresses their child's specific strengths and areas for development rather than that which contains generic curricular information. In too many schools, reports rely on the content that is covered in lessons rather than how well a child has developed their skills.

Many parents know the process for raising concerns at their child's school but around half of parents of secondary pupils do not find it easy to contact their

child's school. Schools that manage communication from parents well have in place clear processes that are closely adhered to by all staff.

An increasing number of schools have appointed home school co-ordinators to support their work with vulnerable pupils and their families. Some also run nurture groups and other pre-school programmes which have a positive impact on children and families.

A majority of secondary school parents and a minority of primary school parents do not feel that they have suitable opportunities to become involved in the life of the school. Schools report mixed responses to their efforts to involve parents directly in the life of the school. An increasing number of schools have established parent forums to enable them to collaborate with parents on school improvement.

Around half of parents consulted are not confident that their views are appropriately represented by the Governing Body of their child's school. This is often because parents are not sure who their governors are or what they do.

The Welsh Government should:

R9 - Give further guidance to schools on how to ensure that governors represent and engage with all parents effectively.

Welsh Government response:

Accept: The Welsh Government accepts the findings of the Estyn report.

We will soon be reporting on the consultation to governor regulations which we anticipate will require us to update guidance to governing bodies. This process, will provide us with the opportunity to include guidance for governing bodies who hold information evenings for parents and embed parental engagement within their self-evaluation framework.

We will also explore how we might be better informed on the composition of governing bodies and whether they effectively represent the school community and surrounding area.

Local authorities should:

R8 - Provide support for schools to develop their parental engagement strategies including the safe and effective use of electronic communication channels, particularly social media.

Schools should:

R1 - Consult with parents about their communication and engagement needs and review their approaches accordingly to enhance two-way communication.

R2 - Improve ways of communicating and engaging with all parents and guardians, in particular with fathers.

R3 - Ensure that reports and parents' evenings focus clearly on a child's specific strengths and areas for development.

R4 - Make clear how staff and parent governors can be contacted, and implement helpful approaches and clear processes for dealing with parental communication.

R5 - Consult on and put in place protocols for parents, pupils and staff on the use of digital communication channels, including social media.

R6 - Seek ways to ensure that they take good account of the views of the full range of parents that make up the socio-economic mix of the school in self-evaluation and other consultation exercises.

R7 - Evaluate parental communication and engagement approaches for the purpose of improvement planning to ensure they have an impact on pupils' standards

The Education Directorate's Support for Learners Division will write to local authorities to draw their attention to the recommendations placed on them and on schools by this report.

Publication details:

The report was published on Estyn's website on 6 June 2018:

www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports