Parent Partnership Strategy template

\*\*\* DELETE THIS SECTION AFTER READING \*\*\*

This template document has been produced to support schools with developing relational practice with parents to improve parent partnerships. We strongly recommend that schools engage with parents, staff and leaders when developing this strategy to help ensure it is an effective operational document which affects culture.

There are pointers in red text throughout this document that should be considered and edited and parts highlighted in yellow need to be amended/deleted.

Take a look at <https://parentsupport.lgfl.net> for more support, including free training for LGfL schools.

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# Terminology

We know that parents and carers are not all the same. We respect that our children’s main caregivers are all different, including different ages, genders, ethnicities, religions, abilities, sexual orientation, careers and personal experiences. We also know that every family is unique and has their own strengths, as well as their own challenges. Within this document, by using the term ‘parents’ we are reflecting the wonderful diversity of all parents and carers of children at our school.

# Vision

Children’s first and most important educators are their parents and carers. When children come to school, we know that parents continue to be the most significant individuals in their child’s life, who have a critical impact on children’s wellbeing, development and achievement. So, to help children thrive and reach their full potential, we want to work successfully in partnership with all parents.

Our vision is that X school is and feels like a friendly, safe and nurturing space for all children and their parents. Everybody in our school community should feel that they are part of X community, and that the school works hard to keep children and their positive outcomes at the centre of everything we do. We want all parents to feel welcomed, respected and valued within the school community, and that we are authentic in the relationships that we build.

We also recognise that not every parent has had a positive experience of school or education, and we acknowledge that there is no one-size fits all approach to working together with parents. But we are united with parents in our passion to help every child to learn and develop to their fullest potential, and this will be the crucial foundation upon which all the relationships we have with parents, are built.

You may wish to add here specific knowledge you have about the communities that your school serves – socio economics, employment, diversity, employment etc, and how you will be inclusive.

# What we Believe

Our approach to working with parents is developed with the following beliefs:

* Parents love their children and want them to succeed. Staff at X school also want all children to be happy and succeed.
* The welfare and safety of children is at the centre of everything we do at X school. This will drive our decisions.
* Parents are experts in their children. School colleagues are experts in teaching and learning.
* Parenting is a difficult task, and all parents need support at different times. Parents face difficult challenges and this can sometimes affect family life and parenting.
* Teaching and learning do not just happen at school. Children’s learning occurs across all aspects of their life e.g. at home, in the community etc.
* Parents are a fundamental part of the school community, who affect children’s learning and outcomes.
* The more engaged parents can be in their children’s learning, the better children’s outcomes are.
* Parental non-engagement with school is an issue that impacts on children’s learning, wellbeing and outcomes.
* Sometimes we can have different views about children’s development and learning, and this is natural. We value parents’ views, and we will strive to work together to agree a solution that is in the child’s best interests.
* We have certain laws and lots of national and local guidance that directs our work in school, and so if we must do something due to this that you are not in agreement with, we will explain this to you as clearly as we can.
* Despite best efforts, we all make mistakes, and we will be open and honest when this happens, so that we can learn and improve.

# Values

The following are our values at X SCHOOL. Our values are the things that are important to all of us, and which motivate and drive our decisions, actions and priorities.

*This section must be personalised to your school. Points to consider:*

* *What are your school values and how do these relate to parents?*
* *Are there any other values that your school has/wants to adopt relating to working together with parents? What are the foundations upon which parental partnership is built in your school?*
* *How do the key values of relational approaches fit here (Empathy, Curiosity, Positive Regard, Authenticity & Human Connection)?*
* *It is useful to describe and give examples of what values look like in terms of behaviour e.g. no good just writing values in this document, what do they look like?*
* *Any key boundaries to mention? E.g. duty to look after staff too*

*The 4 principles for working with parents outlined in* [*Working Together to Safeguard Children*](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf) *(2023) are outlined below. You may wish to use these (or a version of) within your strategy.*

1. *Effective partnership working with parents and carers happens when practitioners build strong, positive, trusting, and co-operative relationships*
2. *Verbal and non-verbal communication should be respectful, non-blaming, clear, inclusive, and adapted to parents and carers needs*
3. *Practitioners empower parents and carers to participate in decision-making to help, support and protect children*
4. *Practitioners involve parents, carers, families, and local communities in designing processes that affect them, including those focused on safeguarding children*

# Communication

Communication is the cornerstone to any relationship in our lives, and something that will help us to form trusting and positive relationships with parents in school. This includes both our verbal and non-verbal communication.

*Please outline how the school will communicate with parents. E.g. what are the ways/apps/modes that you use to communicate? How often? How do you ensure diversity in your approach?*

*How and who should parents liaise with?*

*How do you ensure a balanced approach to communication (not just communicating when there are issues)?*

*How do you encourage parents to initiate communication with you? What opportunities do you provide?*

*What about accessibility of communication and diversity to reflect parents’ requirements e.g. use of translation/interpreters, reduction of jargon, easy read language etc.?*

*Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) states:*

* *Practitioners should ensure that all materials provided to children, parents, carers, and families are jargon free, developmentally appropriate and in a format that is easily understood. Where appropriate, material provided to children, parents, carers, and families should be made accessible and translated into their first language if necessary. Professional interpreters should be provided where needed. Practitioners should not need to rely on family members or partners for interpretation services, including British Sign Language.*

**Conversations that may feel difficult**

Things don’t always go to plan and sometimes issues may arise relating to your child. This may mean we need to have necessary conversations that could feel difficult. When this happens, we will act and communicate with transparency and openness so that everyone is clear about what the issue is and what we agree to try and resolve the situation, and most importantly, help your child. Please talk to us if you are worried about this.

All schools have a responsibility to ensure that children are **safe**, **happy** and **well**; this is our safeguarding duty. If anything happens that makes us worried about a child (inside or outside of school), we are required to follow our safeguarding procedures which can be found here (ADD LINK). Sometimes people can be anxious about this, however safeguarding is very broad and includes when we have a worry about:

* a change in a child’s emotions or behaviour
* a child’s mental wellbeing
* attendance
* a child’s behaviour online
* issues between children in or outside of school or online
* a child not thriving
* something a child tells us

If any concerns do arise about your child, you may hear from or speak to the following people in school:

* *DSL and DDSL names and contacts*

Equally, if you are worried about your child and need to talk to us for support and advice, please contact:

* *Add contacts*

If you are ever unhappy with something we have done in the school, we hope to be able to resolve this quickly through healthy dialogue, so please speak to us as soon as possible. However, if that is not possible, then please ADD DETAILS ABOUT YOUR Complaints procedure

# Creating opportunities

We want all parents to feel welcomed at school and have plenty of opportunities to get to know us, be part of your child’s learning and to get to know others in the community. To help with this we will strive to …..

*How will you get to know each pupil and their family when they join the school?*

*How do you make a proactive effort to ensure equity for ALL parents and avoid making wrong assumptions about what parents from different backgrounds think and need?*

*What opportunities (informal and formal) will you create for parent engagement in school? E.g. coffee mornings, parent advisory groups, class reps, social events, utilisation of parent skills and assets, volunteer opportunities etc.*

*Remember informal networks of support between parents can help improve families’ wellbeing. How can you help to generate this?*

*How will parents be enabled to get to know members of the school team? Website, start of term meetings with teacher/s etc.*

*NB: Having an ‘open door policy’ on its own is not sufficient due to the many challenges parents can face in engaging with schools, so the school should try and create diverse opportunities, and pay particular attention to individuals or groups who find the more traditional methods of engagement, a challenge.*

# Policy into Practice

This strategy will only be effective if it reflects what we all see, hear and feel in the school. So to help transfer these words into reality we …..

*Add detail about what you doing practice to embed relational practice and positively engage parents e.g.:*

* *Staff training and support*
* *Home school learning agreement*
* *Review school policies and procedures using a relational lens and consider the impact on all members of the school’s community including parents*
* *Ways of getting to know families*
* *How to continuously/regularly engage with parents to be reflexive of their needs/wants*
* *Collecting feedback and assessing impact through:*
  + *The numbers of complaints raised by parents*
  + *Parental responses to surveys*
  + *Informal feedback received from parents*
  + *Staff responses to surveys*
  + *Parental engagement in events put on by the school*
  + *Parent engagement levels with the website/apps*
  + *Student attendance*
  + *Engagement of parents with Early Help services*
* *Review this Strategy by XXX every year/2 years*