

Partnering with parents: five strategies for stronger school communities

Lynn How, a SENCO with over 24 years of experience in education, shares practical advice on how staff can engage parents more effectively, strengthen collaboration, and build a supportive school community.

Find out more and access our free resources: educationsupport.org.uk/parents

1.



Adopt acceptance and non-judgement

Adopting an attitude of acceptance means respecting a parent's feelings, personal values and experiences as valid, even if they are different from staff's own or they disagree with them. By taking time to imagine yourself in the parents' place, you can be more genuine and empathic.

2.



Reframe the 'hard to reach' parent label

Describing a group as 'hard-to-reach' can subtly influence attitudes, fostering assumptions or stereotypes that deepen the disconnect between schools and parents. Consider offering alternative methods of participation such as virtual meetings, online forums, or translators.

3.



Hone your home-school communications

Are you using the appropriate communication channels for those in your unique setting? How regularly are you sharing communication expectations with parents and staff? What about technological advancements?

4.



Utilise your wider community

Collaborating with community organisations and support networks to provide additional resources and assistance for parents, can have a positive impact on their relationship with the school and child's learning. This can be a really powerful way to reach parents from diverse backgrounds and build trust.

5.



Support staff with parental challenges

If staff who are struggling with any type of parental behaviour, feel they can ask for help when they need it, without fear of shame, judgement or putting their career and reputation in danger, then they will likely do this sooner. This is better for everyone, including pupils, colleagues and parents.