

Best Practice in Engaging Parents, Pupils and Communities
An Islington Charter for Primary Schools: School Self-Evaluation Tool

Engaging our parents/carers

We make sure senior leaders and staff are visible

This is particularly important at the start and end of the day when it can make a real difference to securing relationships and holding meaningful dialogue. It is useful if parents are clear about roles and responsibilities so know who to go to directly for help with any issue.

RAG rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We think about communication with parents, from the parents' point of view.

We reflect on the following questions: how often and in what ways does the school communicate with each parent? Who is on the gate every morning to meet and greet? Do parents receive a class curriculum newsletter on a regular basis so they can talk to their child about their learning? What use is made of technology such as text messaging, the Dojo app or the school website? How are parents' evenings organised? We know that relationships and trust are key and take time and effort to build.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We put on events which encourage all parents to come into school.

We consider what parents might enjoy for themselves, separate from their children, as well as what might be useful to support their child. We make the school a community hub where parents feel comfortable. We are mindful when targeting particular groups: workshops and coffee mornings are a universal offer where possible, with extra effort put into encouraging targeted parents to attend. We put these on at various times to encourage involvement.

Ideas include: an invitation to share lunch with their child and class once a term; coffee mornings and workshops around projects such as sewing, photography, money management, e-safety; assemblies; workshops around ways to support their child's learning; coming into their child's classroom.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We get feedback from parents, carers and pupils, and respond to it.

This might be around curriculum, extra-curricular activities, or parent events. If their voices are valued, they are more likely to engage and there may be important pointers for improvements.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We respond to parents' calls or emails within an agreed timeframe.

Each call, visit or email is an attempt to communicate and will leave a lasting impression on a parent. We appreciate that opportunities to build relationships, address problems, change perceptions are there in every effort a parent makes.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We put in place advocates for children and parents.

Learning mentors are often well placed to do this and can play a crucial role in developing relationships with parents and helping them in challenging circumstances. Staff champions who are seen as 'child advocates' give pupils an active voice which can bring about visible change and so support wellbeing.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

During the school day

We plan time to discuss every child as an individual learner.

This might take the form of pupil progress meetings and/or spotlight days for groups of pupils. These discussions typically involve several professionals within the school and make use of a range of data, including understanding the pastoral needs of pupils.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We celebrate success in ways which include all pupils

We ask ourselves questions such as: do all pupils get selected as star of the week over the course of a year? Do all parents get invited to celebration assemblies where their child shines? Is there work from every pupil displayed around the school?

Other ideas include: class books which travel up the school with each class and provide a visual reminder of a collective journey which pupils can look through any time.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We prioritise quality first teaching.

This includes the development of teaching and non-teaching staff and a focus on unlocking the potential of every child. Skilful differentiation is crucial as is high expectations for all pupils, regardless of current attainment.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We provide a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum.

This includes a focus on languages, the arts and music, regular trips, inspiring assemblies. It also involves interrogation of texts and topics to make sure that pupils can see themselves in their learning experiences and that there are opportunities to make links between the worlds of home and school.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We take up opportunities to build a sense of community beyond the school.

This may involve trips which are integrated into learning topics and allow pupils to see the relevance and benefits of learning. Or outside organisations coming into school to deliver workshops or offer skills and experiences.

Other ideas include the use of volunteers (eg. gardening, reading); local elderly people being invited into lunch on a regular basis; ex-pupils returning to the school to volunteer, visit or work.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We evaluate interventions rigorously.

We monitor and evaluate interventions and make adjustments where necessary. We know that Interventions are often resource heavy and need to be effective.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We are inclusive in the way we provide extra-curricular activities

We think carefully about how the school provides extra-curricular activities and trips so that they are accessible to all pupils, regardless of parental income. We know that divisions can be easily created and contribute to a sense that certain activities (such as music lessons) are for a particular type of pupil.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We value 'social time' with all pupils and parents.

This might involve staff having lunch with pupils (and sometimes parents), space for informal conversations in the playground, and school trips. We know that these contribute to positive relationships between staff and pupils.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We see secondary transition as a process which requires support over time.

It is a lengthy process during which parents and pupils need support of varying kinds. It may involve visiting schools, particularly within the borough, so staff can share information face to face. In some cases, it may involve taking parents to schools and supporting their online application. We know that pupils need space to prepare emotionally and psychologically as well as academically.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

Strengthening Our Staff

We strengthen communication between staff.

This might be through morning briefings, a booklet about procedures which is revisited at the start of every year, pupil progress meetings, staff star noticeboard for people to acknowledge acts of support and kindness.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We don't make a separation between teaching and support staff

We treat all members of staff as part of the school family, including catering and cleaning staff. This might include inviting them to staff events, providing training, drawing on their individual skills, strengths and experiences, encouraging dialogue with pupils so that they are known as valuable adults within the school community.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve:

We would like our staff to be as diverse as the communities we serve

We consider representation in every arena. We consider gender as well as ethnicity and class when recruiting members of staff, governors and parents for organisations such as the PTA.

Rag rating:

Aspects and ideas to improve: