

Parental Engagement Project with schools in Suffolk

Funded by the Suffolk Community Foundation "Raising the Bar" fund



This broadsheet is designed to disseminate the results of a project which ran from Feb 2017 – Feb 2018 to help develop parental engagement in Suffolk schools and trial resources to engage parents in their children's learning. It was led by the Parental Engagement Network (www.penetnetwork.co.uk) a not-for-profit social enterprise based in Manchester and working nationally to help schools and settings improve their parental engagement. The project worked with three secondary schools and twelve primary schools and was funded by the Suffolk Community Foundation and supported by the local authority.



Initially, one day's training was provided for staff from each primary school, including a senior leader.

20 staff from 12 schools attended the session, which included a strategic overview of parental engagement, opportunities to share current practice and input on developing a whole school approach.

Schools then chose specific projects to implement at different key stages which included attractive resources to engage parents in their children's learning. This included:

Mouse Club Transition and home learning project (early years) - Activities

and a mouse to help children get school-ready, followed by resources to engage parents in phonics and maths activities;

Playclub (KS1) – bags containing exciting activities to raise achievement in language, phonics and applied reading and writing;

Family Detective Reading Project (KS2) – engaging families in developing reading and comprehension skills through solving a theft together;

The secondary schools were offered **Moving Up** – a project offering a range of strategies and resources to engage parents at the transition into High School.

"Amazing – really helpful, inspiring. Opportunities to reflect on current practice with ideas for improvements. Very organised and very well delivered. Thank you!"

New Cangle School

"Very personal and engaging. Lovely resources to share and ideas of how you use them."

Hannah Marsden, All Saints Primary School

Early Years: "Mouse Club" Transition and Home learning Project



Four schools trialled Mouse Club – Hillside, Saxmundham, Wilby and All Saints primary schools, with between 8 and 41 children.

The schools ran two or three workshops in the summer term before the children started at nursery. Families were given a toy

mouse to help the child get

ready for school, activities for Mouse to do with them, and tip sheets for parents including information on how to develop routines, language and

independence skills.

The project aimed to build the confidence and skills of school staff to work with parents and build up relationships with parents early on, help children settle into school with a transitional object (Mouse) and help parents to support their child's development and learning.

Once the children had started school parents attended further workshops and were given home learning activities such as FUN (Families Understanding Numeracy) maths activities to do at



"We thought the project was great and will continue to use it."

Molly Hunt, Pre-School Lead, Wilby Primary School

“Mouse Club” Transition and Home Learning Project continued

Outcomes

School staff gained the confidence and skills to work with parents

- 100% of staff said they found the training useful or very useful.
- “I now realise how important parents are in the transition process.” (Hannah Marsden, All Saints).
- “I now feel confident to talk to parents and support them.” (Emily Hammond, Hillside)

It helped children to become school ready and with the transition into school

- 80% of parents thought having Mouse helped to get their child ready for school.

- Lots of parents reported how Mouse helped children feel better about the transition; “My child was anxious about coming in to school; having Mouse helped.” (Jessica, Parent, Wilby CEVC Primary)
- They described how Mouse had helped “with his talking and becoming more independent at school” and “with toilet training and talking” (Parents from Hillside Community Primary School)

The workshops helped parents to get to know each other.

- At All Saints Primary, parents started their own group on social media. Staff at Hillside reported that “supportive friendships

“Showed me how to get my son’s hands ready for writing with different exercises for his hands, with playdough.”

Jessica, Parent, Hillside Primary School

“It opened my eyes to the theory behind it – modelling is key!”

Hannah Marsden, All Saints Primary School

developed between some mums.”

Staff said they would embed the project into school practice.

- 100% of staff who gave feedback said that they would use Mouse and some of the resources and strategies again.



Interested? Mouse Club is available from only £130—see www.penetnetwork.co.uk/pen-resources. New evidence from a randomised control trial has shown that the home learning project has a positive impact on the home learning environment – see the Oxford University Report www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/engaging-parents-effectively-early-years/

KS1: The Playclub Project

Eight schools did the Playclub 3 or 4 project. Playclub involves loaning a variety of exciting Playclub bags to families every week over 6 weeks, with achievements being recorded and celebrated with a Playclub card and certificate. They include fun activities like putting on ‘oo’ spectacles to find the different spellings of ‘oo’ words in Mister Magnolia and fishing

for boots to make words.

Broke Hall Community Primary School, Saxmundham Primary, All Saints CEVP School, Hillside Primary School, Coldfair Green Community Primary School, Trimley St Mary Primary school, St Mary’s Academy, New Cangle CP School were involved.

Schools held workshops to show

parents the resources, model the activities and distribute the bags.

Some schools did the project with small groups of targeted children, some did it with the whole class and others had a less formal drop-in arrangement.

“She liked the shark one as it was a fun way to spell words. I think the variety and different ideas in each pack made it interesting each time.”

Rebecca, Parent, Wilby Primary School

“It was fantastic!”

Pupil, New Cangle School

“I have learnt how to communicate more effectively with parents.”

Debra Duggan, Inclusion Lead, Coldfair Green Primary School



Outcomes

Developing staff confidence to work with parents

- Staff found it helpful to share what went well at other schools, how other schools implemented the project and the opportunity to discuss any problems.
- Staff described how much they had learnt from the training and doing the project.
- **"I have learnt how important learning through play is. I have also learnt that children really enjoy it when families are involved."** (Charlotte Bass, Class Teacher, New Cangle School)
- **"How to engage parents is different for each. Parents need more than to just talk about school, sometimes they want to talk about their weekend etc. Be open**

minded!" (Emma Marshall, Phase Leader, Broke Hall Primary School)

Improving children's phonics and reading skills

- Broke Hall found that children were more willing to share and talk about books in class.
- Coldfair Green found that parents understood better how to help their child. They saw children and parents engaged and excited, and all but one child had an increased score in their phonics screening test (baseline assessment).
- Before Playclub, the 8 targeted children at New Cangle did not score highly enough on their mock phonics screening. After, 5 children passed and all of them enjoyed the project. Staff felt they were able to explain about the phonics

screening more easily to parents. They also saw parents spending more time with their children.

- Broke Hall also now have a previously reluctant parent who is now really engaged and has asked to come into school to be a parent helper. This is a big achievement for both the parent and the school.
- 100% of parents who gave feedback felt that the project had impacted positively on their child's phonics, reading development, motivation and confidence.

Interested?

Set of 8 bags and teacher's pack is available from only £199
For more information and to see videos showing parents doing the Playclub activities visit see www.penetnetwork.co.uk/playclub-project

KS2: Family Detectives Reading Project



"Parents believe they now better understand how to help children develop reading skills as a result of the project. Most children believe the project has helped them to pick out info from a text."

Adam Smith, Yr 5 Teacher, Broke Hall Primary School

Three schools completed and evaluated the KS2 Family Detective Reading Project; New Cangle who involved 12 families in Year 5 and Broke Hall and Coldfair Green both of which involved 23 Year 4 families.

The project starts and ends with a workshop to which parents are invited, and families complete a set of assignments together to find out who committed a theft and develop their comprehension skills.

The schools set up initial workshops as crime scenes: **"setting up an active crime scene worked well and created excitement from the children."** (Karen Mason, Yr 5 Teacher, New Cangle Primary School) .

Outcomes

- Broke Hall noted a positive attitudinal change in motivation to read among children.
- 100% of staff who gave feedback said that they would run the project again and would recommend it to other schools
- Families liked **"thinking about the clues together and working out the answers"** (Lucy, Parent, New Cangle School)
- 67% of parents who gave feedback said that they though the project had helped their child or improved their motivation and 67% said it had helped them understand how to help their child to develop their reading
- 100% thought it was good to have special homework projects to do together as a family
- 98% of the children at New Cangle School said they had enjoyed **"being together and working together"** on a project with their family.



Interested?

Pack available from just £75: see www.penetnetwork.co.uk/pen-resources

KS3: Moving Up



Three secondary schools – Thomas Gainsborough, Felixstowe and Castle Manor were trained to run the Moving Up project which enables schools to review their communication with parents, develop more interactive meetings and engage families in summer and autumn activities to support children's transition into high school.

Castle Manor used the Moving Up strategies and resources with 125 pupils and their families. 26 have SEN; 46 are eligible for pupil premium. Following the training sessions, staff reviewed arrangements for transition

and induction, and used the Moving Up materials and strategies to develop a programme that would meet the particular needs of the Castle Manor community.

Parents were invited to attend a transition meeting where a much greater emphasis than usual was placed on parents meeting with their child's tutor. Expectations and how to support their child's learning were a key theme.

Fridge magnets were given to all families with their tutor's contact details, and top tips to support

learning.

Parents were then invited into an informal settling in evening to build the tutor-parent relationship, and all of Year 7 was invited on a trip to London with their families to see the play *Matilda*.

The headteacher is visiting all the linked primary schools to meet families informally.

Castle Manor's achievement leader, Kirk Bonas, delivered a whole school inset on the transition and induction programme for families.



"It was an opportunity to meet and discuss transition and induction with other schools. The framework provided by the Moving Up programme was very useful with the flexibility to use as appropriate to the school needs."

Kirk Bonas, Achievement Leader, Castle Manor Academy

Outcomes

- 95% families attended the settling-in evening and 100% families attended an academic review of progress.
- Attendance in Year 7 is currently 98.6% - last year it was 80%.
- Parents are supporting the new phone initiative and there have been significantly fewer complaints that "my child is being bullied" as a result.
- All but 2 families attended the trip to London which raised aspirations for the children and their families.

We are very grateful to Suffolk Community Foundation, Gavin Talbot and Maria Hough (Suffolk County Council), and all the pupils, parents and staff at all the schools involved.

For more information about training and resources from Parental Engagement Network, please see penresources.co.uk.

If you have a group of schools interested in a few of the training courses please contact us to discuss this.



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