



Parental engagement

A guide for governing boards in single schools

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) [Maintained schools governance guide](#) makes clear that an effective governing board builds relationships with parents and other stakeholders to create a sense of trust and shared ownership of the school strategy and its vision.

Governing boards should make sure the school has systems and processes in place to communicate regularly with parents, helping them to understand:

- the structure of the school
- how the school operates
- how they can support their child's education
- how they can put forward their views

Governing boards also have a statutory duty to have regard to parental views on specific issues.

This guidance was produced by the National Governance Association (NGA) in collaboration with Parentkind. It covers:

Part 1: school engagement with parents – benefits and effective strategies

Part 2: overseeing parental engagement – governing board monitoring

Throughout this guide we refer to '**parents**', meaning **anyone in a parental role**, which may include carers, stepfamilies, grandparents and others.

About Parentkind

As a national federated charity, Parentkind gives those with a parenting role a voice in education. Parentkind invest substantial resources in representing parent views on their child's learning to local, regional, and national governments and agencies.

Evidence tells us that parental participation in education benefits all children in all schools and society as a whole. Parentkind's network of 13,000 Parent Teacher Associations mobilises over 100,000 volunteer fundraisers to raise in excess of £120 million annually to fund vital equipment and services for our schools.

Parentkind's programme of support for schools includes:

- [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools](#)
- [Parental participation training for schools](#)
- [Parent-Friendly Schools Accreditation](#)
- [The National Parent Survey](#)

[Parentkind.org](https://parentkind.org)

1. School engagement with parents

Parental participation benefits

When parents are involved in pupils’ learning there is a well-evidenced link with improved educational outcomes across a range of measures, including:

- behaviour
- self-esteem
- attendance
- risk of exclusion
- keenness to learn
- academic results
- reducing the attainment gap

Effective engagement strategies

Treating parents as partners, as experts on their children and offering opportunities for collaboration and consultation, will bring schools and families together in a connected community.

School leaders are responsible for developing and implementing communication and engagement mechanisms. Parentkind has identified actions that schools can consider as part of making long-lasting improvements in parental participation.

Potential actions	Considerations:
Name a lead for stakeholder participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the school’s leadership team could be assigned to take the lead on parental engagement. • Governing boards may also establish link roles for governors to help monitor stakeholder engagement.
Train staff on parental participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most teaching staff haven’t received specific parental engagement training. • Training can help to increase confidence and could be provided ‘in house’ or through an external provider such as Parentkind.
Create a home-school agreement and code of conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements can cover how to communicate with the school, social media policies and behavioural requirements on the premises. • This creates clear boundaries and expectations for parents.
Provide a forum that supports consultation and shared decision making (such as a parent council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for schools to hear from parents is as important as the school communicating information to parents. • The decisions and actions taken may differ from the feedback parents provide – in such cases, it is even more important that schools communicate well and demonstrate that feedback has been considered.

What Ofsted look for

Under the Education Inspection Framework, Ofsted seek to understand how schools engage with parents about the education that is provided. To help them do so, inspectors use the [Parent View website](#), which allows parents to record their views of a school across a standard range of questions.

The results (provided enough parents have submitted responses) can be viewed at any time on the Ofsted website. Inspectors will also take into account results of any past surveys the school has carried out or commissioned.

[Find out more about Ofsted inspection](#)

Overcoming barriers

Parentkind's [research](#) shows that teachers know the value of engagement and parents want to play an active role in their child's education. However, all families have different experiences, circumstances, and needs which may impact on their capacity or willingness to engage.

- Almost half (49%) of parents say they don't have time to contribute to their child's school as much as they would like.
- 1 in 5 (20%) parents say they don't have the skills/knowledge to support their child's learning as much as they would like to.
- Almost 1 in 5 (19%) parents find the idea of getting involved in their child's school intimidating.

Effective parental participation requires a planned and sustained effort to overcome challenges, taking into account:

- parents with language and/or communication barriers
- working parents who have little funds and/or time to attend events and meetings
- parents who had a negative school experience as a child
- parents who feel they lack skills and resources to support children
- those who have not felt listened to or consulted in the past
- parents' confidence and competence with technology platforms used for communication

Parentkind's research highlights that there are also opportunities to better support teachers to ensure they have the necessary skills and confidence to form positive and productive relationships with parents.

- 5% of teachers have undertaken CPD on parental engagement
- Only 58% of teachers say they are confident engaging with parents
- 64% of teachers believe there are barriers to engaging with parents

2. Overseeing parental engagement

Governing boards are responsible for overseeing stakeholder engagement strategies and should ensure that the school is able to engage meaningfully with all parents.

Governors should consider:

- What methods does the school rely on to communicate with parents?
- Are the school’s methods inclusive to all parents and any additional needs they may have – how do we know? (Think about parents that the school have struggled to engage)
- How is the school involving parents in its strategic priorities?
- How does the school use the support of national organisations such as Parentkind and NGA to strengthen parental participation?
- Is training provided to all members of staff to support them to engage with parents effectively?
- How welcoming is the school environment for parents?

Governing board monitoring

The following methods can be used to monitor the school’s approach, gain insights from a variety of sources and track progress over time.

Methods	Approaches and benefits
Monitoring visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor visits provide an opportunity to experience school culture first-hand and assess how the school welcomes parents.
Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forums or parent councils can provide a mechanism for seeking views and understanding areas for development.
Parent surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders are responsible for day-to-day communication with parents and for designing and implementing parent surveys, whereas governors evaluate responses (usually via a summary provided by the headteacher). • The insights gathered can help governors to provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.
Parent View website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run by Ofsted, this allows parents to record their views of the school and can be accessed at any time. • Survey results are available for governing boards (as well as school staff and the general public) to review.

Shaping vision and strategy

The governing board and headteacher have a shared responsibility for developing a strategy that reflects the values of their school.

Giving stakeholders a role in developing the vision and strategy enhances legitimacy and creates a shared sense of ownership amongst the school community. Seeking views and feedback from stakeholders also helps the governing board to accurately assess how the school is performing – an essential starting point for developing a successful strategy.

“When setting the school’s vision, it is vital that the governing body is both connected and responsive to pupils, staff, parents and carers, and its communities through effective engagement.” – **Maintained schools governance guide (DfE)**

NGA’s [Being Strategic guidance](#) provides a framework for collaborative strategy development.

Visible governance

Visible boards can increase their credibility with parents. Governing boards should work proactively to help parents understand the role of the governing board as transparency around decision making increases the likelihood of parents ‘buying in’ to the board’s strategy.

Ways to make governance more visible to stakeholders include:

- **Annual governance reports** – ideal for communicating strategic plans and reporting on progress. Ensure this is a high-level update, presented in an accessible format.
- **Termly updates** – direct communication with parents (a letter from the chair, for example).
- **Attending parents evening** – an opportunity to speak to parents and explain the board’s role. ‘Meet-and-greet’ sessions can make governing boards feel less formal.
- **Making the most of the ‘governance’ area of school websites** to help parents learn more about governors and the boards ongoing work, including success stories/impact (for example, through a blog and biographies with pictures).
- **Visiting family and community hubs** that support children, young people and their parents in the local community.

Visit [NGA’s Visible Governance campaign page](#) for more ideas and actions you can take.

The role of parent governors

The role of a parent governor is no different to any other governor. Whilst parent governors offer a valuable parental perspective to issues being discussed, they should not act in the capacity of a parental representative. Their role should not be confused with the board’s responsibility to ensure effective parental engagement.

Learn more about the [parent governor role](#).

NGA is the national membership association for governors, trustees and governance professionals in England's state schools and trusts.

We empower those in school and trust governance with valuable resources, expert support and e-learning. Together, we're raising standards and shaping stronger governance to ensure every pupil can thrive today – and tomorrow.

nga.org.uk