

# Parental engagement in children's learning needs to move beyond school

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Standards in education are being held back by a lack of meaningful parental engagement in children's learning, according to the authors of a study from our researchers, highlighted in the Welsh Government's

Toolkit for Parental Engagement launched today.

In the paper, published in Educational Review, researchers from our Department of Education suggest that whilst rafts of measures to boost standards in schools are making a difference, future progress will depend on the extents to which parents involve themselves in children's learning, most notably in low-income areas.

To date the push towards parental engagement has often been tokenistic – judged, for example, by turnout at parents' evenings – and also rooted firmly in schools, they suggest. This must be broadened so that more parents actively involve themselves in children's learning and education once the bell at the end of the day has rung.

The study points to evidence that for children and young people aged from 4 to 19 seeing signs that parents truly care and are interested in their studies can make a significant difference in terms of their levels of motivation and overall performance.

For schools, who in order to achieve 'outstanding' Ofsted rating must now show how better engagement with parents is having a positive effect on children's learning, the key might be giving parents clear, practical instructions than can help embed learning at home as much as in a school.

Lead author, Dr Janet Goodall explained: "In too many cases a perception exists that the responsibility of children's learning lies solely with the school, or largely with the school. This perception needs to shift to one where parents and schools better share this responsibility, with parents taking a more active role in their children's learning.



Better parental engagement in children's learning is critical to improving education standards, according to the authors of a new study from our Department of Education.

"Teachers can play a role in bringing this about, by proposing simple steps that encourage parents to take a lead in this too, and giving them confidence in their abilities to do so but it can't be all about what happens in the 6-7 hours during school time.

"More meaningful parental engagement, which moves beyond attendance at parents' evenings, is the most sustainable approach. Our research shows this will lead to more positive outcomes."

Through their work, the researchers propose simple steps that could help parents gain confidence to bring about more meaningful engagement. This includes support to help to get good habits established in early years, as well as encouragement to help parents support [children's](#) active [learning](#).

Co-author Caroline Montgomery added: "Best practice in Parental Engagement has often been confused with an overload of activities which require parents to be passive recipients of directed events based on a school's desire to get [parents](#) involved. Only when an equitable, reciprocal partnership is established and valued does genuine engagement take place."

**More information:** "Parental involvement to parental engagement: a continuum." [DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2013.781576](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.781576)

Provided by University of Bath

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