



Educational Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and
subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rere20>

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Version of record first published: 05 Sep 2008.

To cite this article: Alma Harris & Janet Goodall (2008): Do parents know they matter? Engaging all
parents in learning, Educational Research, 50:3, 277-289

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131880802309424>

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Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning

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(Received 21 May 2007; final version received 12 April 2008)

Background: This paper outlines the findings from a research project carried out in the UK that explored the relationship between parental engagement and student achievement.

Purpose: The 12-month research project was commissioned to explore the relationship between innovative work with parents and the subsequent impact upon student achievement. A main aim of the research project was to capture the views and voices of parents, students and teachers and to explore the barriers to parental engagement and the respective benefits to learning.

Programme description: The study was qualitative in design and collected in-depth case-study data from 20 schools and 314 respondents. In addition a range of documentary evidence plus performance data were collected at each case-study site.

Sample: A sample of schools in England was selected on two main criteria: firstly, the type of development, and secondly, the particular focus of parental engagement. Schools in the sample were selected to ensure that there was a broad geographical spread and a mix of urban and rural schools. Other factors were also taken into account to ensure a diverse range of schools (e.g. number on roll, socio-economic status (SES) and black minority ethnic (BME) percentages).

Design and methods: Case-study methodology was used as the prime method of data collection in the study. In addition, school data sets relating to student performance, behaviour and attendance were analysed. These data sets allowed patterns and trends to be identified. This analysis formed the basis of the more detailed interrogation of the case-study evidence at each of the 20 sites.

Results: The research findings highlight a number of barriers facing certain parents in supporting their children's learning. It is clear that powerful social and economic factors still prevent many parents from fully participating in schooling. The research showed that schools rather than parents are often 'hard to reach'. The research also found that while parents, teachers and pupils tend to agree that parental engagement is a 'good thing', they also hold very different views about the purpose of engaging parents. It is also clear that there is a major difference between involving parents in schooling and engaging parents in learning. While involving parents in school activities has an important social and community function, it is only the engagement of parents in learning in the home that is most likely to result in a positive difference to learning outcomes.

Conclusions: Parental engagement in children's learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement. Most schools are involving parents in school-based activities in a variety of ways but the evidence shows but this has little, if any, impact on subsequent learning and achievement of young people.

Keywords: parental engagement; parental involvement; raising achievement; school improvement; home school partnerships; hard to reach parents

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Introduction

Across the world there is a growing recognition of the importance of engaging parents, families and communities in raising the educational aspirations and attainment of young people (DEECD 2008). There is a wealth of evidence which highlights that parental engagement in schooling positively influences pupil achievement and attainment (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). In many countries and across different school systems the issue of engaging parents in schooling is a shared aspiration and goal. However, it also brings many challenges.

In England, the issue of parental engagement is once again at the epicenter of policy. New government guidelines for improving the provision for children and young people have been introduced in the form of the Children's Plan. This Plan outlines a strategy for the next 10 years to 'tackle low aspirations in early years, schools, colleges and other services' (DCSF 2007, 3). The Children's Plan reinforces the need to involve parents in education in order to secure greater well-being of young people, and also to secure higher achievement. At the core of the Children's Plan is the firm belief that parental engagement makes a significant difference to educational outcomes and that parents and carers¹ have a key role to play in raising educational standards. In summary, the more engaged parents are in the education of their children the more likely their children are to achieve academic success.

The empirical evidence shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement and school improvement (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Harris and Chrispeels 2006). A recent review of early childhood literature (Sylva et al. 2004) reinforces the finding that engaging parents in schooling at an early stage leads to more positive engagement in learning processes. The importance of parents' educational attitudes and behaviours on young people's educational attainment has also been well documented, especially in the developmental psychology literature (Birenbaum-Carmeli 1999; Bogenschneider 1999; Catsambis 2001; Fan and Chen 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems and Holbein 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2001; Keith et al. 1986, 1993; Kohl, Lengua and McMahon 2000; Muller 1995; Overstreet et al. 2004; Snodgrass 1991; Spera 2005; Taylor, Hinton and Wilson 1995).

Inevitably, research concerning the impact of parental engagement on achievement and attainment is complex due to the interaction and influence of many factors and variables. There are multiple characteristics or correlates that influence the levels of student achievement and the attainment of educational outcomes. However, the contemporary empirical evidence points towards a powerful association between parental engagement and student achievement. It highlights that parental engagement in learning *at home* throughout the age range has a significant influence on subsequent educational achievement (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). The research evidence also acknowledges that parental engagement is only one of many factors which influences educational achievement but highlights that its influence is particularly significant (Fan and Chen 2001).

Longitudinal studies, such as those conducted by Sylva et al. (2004), provide the most recent research evidence about parental engagement. These studies reinforce the link between parental engagement in young people's *learning* in school with better cognitive achievement, particularly in the early years. In contrast, parental engagement in general school activities confers little or no real benefit on the individual child (Okpala, Okpala and Smith 2001). Simply being in the school has little effect on individual attainment unless there are direct and explicit connections to learning (Ho Sui-Chu and Willms 1996). It is what parents do to support learning in the school *and* in the home that makes the

difference to achievement. However, as the most recent review of the literature (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003) has highlighted, there are many factors which directly influence the quality and nature of parental engagement.

Factors influencing parental engagement

Disentangling the web of variables enmeshing the whole of family–school relationships and their impact on learning is a complex task. But it is very clear that levels of engagement vary considerably depending on the parents and the context in which they find themselves. A major factor mediating parental engagement is socio-economic status, whether indexed by occupational class or parental (especially maternal) level of education. Study after study has shown that socio-economic status (SES) mediates both parental engagement and pupil achievement

In their work, Sacker, Schoon and Bartley (2002) showed that SES had its impact, in part negatively, through material deprivation, and in part, through attitudes and behaviours towards education. Feinstein and Sabates (2006) found an association between the duration of mother's full-time education and her attitudes and behaviours. Results from their study show that an additional year of post-compulsory schooling from mothers was significantly associated with the index of educational attitudes and behaviours (i.e. mothers who stay in full-time education beyond the minimum school-leaving age are more likely to demonstrate positive educational attitudes and behaviours such as reading to their children).

Reay's (2000) work on parents' emotional capital demonstrates quite clearly the advantages that middle-class parents have in securing better educational provision and outcomes. Drawing on fieldwork from a study of mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling, her work examines mothers' emotional engagement with their education. The findings tentatively conclude that the relationships between educational success, emotional capital and emotional well-being, and the extent of overlap and difference between them, explains how a range of disadvantages persistently face certain groups. This work also suggests that certain barriers are being manufactured in the contemporary educational market-place, and as educational levels for those with lower educational aspirations rise, individuals with positional ambition increase their education further in order to maintain a relative advantage (Ball 1998).

The literature suggests that among the non-school factors of school achievement like socio-economic background, parents' educational attainment, family structure, ethnicity and parental engagement, it is the latter which is the most strongly connected to achievement and attainment. The research shows that the impact of parental engagement arises from parental values and educational aspirations continuously exhibited through parental enthusiasm for and their own experiences of education. It also shows that while the effects of parental engagement, as manifested in the home, can be significant, they are influenced by a wide range of factors (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Fan and Chen 2001).

Promoting certain forms of parental engagement may actually reinforce the existing power divisions between schools, teachers and parents, and reproduce, rather than break down, existing educational inequalities around class, gender and ethnicity (Crozier et al. 2000; David 1993; Fine 1993; Hallgarten 2000; Hanafin and Lynch 2002; Lareau 1989; Rea and Weiner 1998; Vincent and Martin 2000). This is, in part, because parental engagement initiatives presuppose that schools, parents and pupils are relatively homogeneous and equally willing and capable of developing parental engagement schemes and general school norms, which is not always the case. Crozier et al. (2000)

challenge the 'blanket assumption' that all parents are the same, with the same needs, and that their children can be treated in the same way. She suggests that, with respect to ethnic minority parents, such an approach obfuscates the importance of tackling the nature and consequences of structural racism. She proposes the 'one size fits all' approach masks the complexity of needs, the roles that ethnic minority parents are playing or the constraints that impede their involvement.

Work by Crozier and Davies (2007) highlights that many parents from ethnic groupings know little about the education system. Such parents are often seen as indifferent or difficult and are considered by schools to be 'hard to reach'. Crozier and Davies (2007) suggest that many parental involvement policies are flawed because they fail to recognise the ethnic diversity among parents. They may in the long run, contribute to widening the gap between the involved and the uninvolved parents, and the achievers and the underachievers among their children.

Parents' expectations set the context within which young people develop, shape their own expectations and aspirations. Middle-class families tend to have culturally supportive social networks, use the vocabulary of teachers, feel entitled to treat teachers as equals and have access to childcare and transportation, all of which facilitate parental engagement in schooling. This social capital allows them to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust. Therefore it would seem that the educational odds are still stacked against children and parents from low-income families and from certain ethnic groups because certain parents actively include themselves and others do not.

Barriers to engagement

One of the most cited reasons for parents not being involved in schooling is work commitments. Lack of time and childcare difficulties seem to be significant factors, predominantly for women and those working full-time. Most parents see the main limitation to engagement in education arising from the demands on their time and the restrictions of work on their availability to attend events such as parents' evenings. Single parents feel very restricted in this respect and tend to be least responsive to invitations and requests from school. However, the issue of time is part of a more complex social and economic picture.

There is evidence to illustrate that certain parents face considerable difficulties in their exchanges with teachers, schools and school administrations. Williams, Williams and Ullman (2002) reported that 16% of parents were wary of overstepping some unwritten mark in their relations with teachers. Parents' evenings are a particularly well-documented site for creating parental frustration and confusion. While there is a broadly held desire among most parents for more engagement in schooling, there are clearly material (time and money) and psychological barriers which operate differentially (and discriminately) across the social classes and individual differences among parents that operate within social classes (Harris and Goodall 2007).

The attribution of responsibility for education is a key factor in shaping parents' views about what they feel is important or necessary or even permissible for them to do. Role definitions are complexly shaped by family and cultural experiences and are subject to potential internal conflict (parent as housekeeper/breadwinner/nurse/teacher). Parental role construction in regard to their child's education is not the only determinant of their engagement. Their 'sense of personal efficacy' is also implicated; this refers to the degree to which they feel able to make a difference. Parents will be involved if they see that supporting and enhancing their child's school achievement is part of their 'job' as a parent.

Likewise, parents will get involved if they feel they have the capacity to contribute (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997).

While the literature highlights that parental engagement makes a significant difference to educational achievement and learning (Epstein 1992; Sammons et al. 1995), we still need to know more about the ways in which parental engagement can be enhanced and facilitated across different sectors of society. The evidence about interventions and programmes aimed at improving parental engagement is patchy, anecdotal and often based on self-report. Consequently, we do not know enough about how to design programmes of intervention that work with different groups of parents in different settings. Creating such knowledge of design requires more in-depth research into parental engagement that captures the voices of parents and students in a serious and authentic way.

Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement project (EPRA)

In the academic year 2006/07 a research project was undertaken which focused on the relationship between parental engagement and raising achievement (Harris and Goodall 2007). The research was part of a larger developmental project, led by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust in conjunction with the Association of School and College Leaders. The Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement Project (EPRA)² was funded by the Department for Education and Skills and was intended to trial new ways of engaging parents in learning, particularly those parents seen as 'hard to reach'. The EPRA project funded innovative work in more than 100 secondary schools across England. All of the projects focused on one or more of the following strands:

- Supporting parents to help their children learn.
- Personalising provision for parents themselves as learners.
- Intelligent reporting ('ireporting').
- Enhancing pastoral care.

The research project was commissioned independently to explore the relationship between the different approaches to parental engagement and student achievement. A particular aim of the research project was to capture the views and voices of parents, students and teachers. The project explored the barriers to engagement and the respective benefits to learning from the perspectives of the different groups.

The 12-month research project was undertaken in two phases. The first phase involved data collection from 30 schools³ from within the EPRA project. Schools were selected on two main criteria: the type of project(s) and the type of parental engagement or strand(s)⁴ being addressed. Schools in the sample were also selected to ensure that there was a broad geographical spread and a mix of urban and rural schools. Other factors were taken into account to ensure a diverse range of schools (e.g. number on roll, SES, BME percentages).

Phase 2 involved in-depth case-studies of a sample of 20 schools. These schools were selected because they had the most innovative practice and were extending their work on parental engagement. All of the case studies involved semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of respondents,⁵ including teachers, parents, support staff and students. In addition, a range of documentary evidence plus performance data was collected at each case-study site.

The data analysis involved the interrogation and manipulation of EPRA data sets about performance, behaviour and attendance. These data sets allowed patterns and trends to be identified. In addition, the team collected and analysed individual school-

based data and evaluative evidence. This analysis formed the backdrop to a more detailed analysis of the case-study evidence and the different views and voices from within the project. From this data a number of key themes emerged.⁶

Different views

The research found that although parental engagement was generally viewed as a ‘good thing’ by teachers, parents and pupils, interpretations of the term varied. Parents tended to view parental engagement as offering ‘support to students’ while teachers viewed it as a means to ‘improved behaviour and support for the school’. Students viewed parental engagement as being primarily about ‘moral support’ and interest in their progress. The data showed that there was no strong consensus about the benefits of parental engagement as it meant different things to the different respondents (Table 1).

In almost every case, respondents agreed that parental engagement was important. Even in interviews where students had expressed reservations about ‘overly involved’ or ‘smothering’ parents, they saw the involvement of parents as a ‘good thing’. Overall, respondents were clear that the engagement of parents was ‘important’, ‘really important’, ‘vital’ to the success of their children’s or their own learning. There were, however, many who equated parental engagement with engagement *with the school* rather than with the *learning* of the young person:⁷

It’s the support and the feedback on what the school is trying to do. (school staff, School N)

It completes the circle – parents supporting school and the school supporting the child. (head teacher, School V)

Throughout the research it was clear that schools were using parental ‘engagement’ and ‘involvement’ interchangeably. There was a view among several schools that any form of parent participation was a ‘good thing’. Most schools did not discern or judge the impact of different forms of parental participation or see a real difference between involvement in school activities and engagement in learning.

Value of parental engagement

Responses to questions about the value of parental engagement in schools elicited two types of responses. The first focused on the practical issues of engagement (i.e. what is it that parents actually *do* when engaging with their children’s learning and/or school). The second response focused on the *value* those actions are perceived to have. The first type of response focused on practicalities – parents helping with homework or assisting with project work or asking about the child’s day. Parents and students also mentioned attendance at parents’ evenings, but overall the majority of responses highlighted the ‘practical ways of being involved’.

Table 1. The value of parental engagement: all respondents.

	Parents	Staff	Student	Total
Moral support	62	25	102	189
Valuing of education	56	17	74	147
Better behaviour	24	32	51	107
Homework	21	14	65	100

The second type of response reflected parents valuing of education and espousing its importance. The data showed that parents were more likely to be involved in their children's education when they believed that such involvement was a key part of what it meant to be a responsible and caring parent. The data showed that students valued the moral support parents gave to their learning more highly than the nature or type of their involvement:

If they weren't interested, then you wouldn't be. (student, School D)

If they didn't want you to do well, then you wouldn't want to do well because it wouldn't make much difference. (student, School C)

Overwhelmingly, students saw the value of parental engagement as being about valuing education. Students were also clear that their peers who lacked this form of support were less likely to do well academically:

They have to find that support from their friends. (student, School C)

You can tell the difference between someone whose parents are involved and when they're not. When they are involved you can see that, like, you work a bit harder, because you've got someone to realise that you are working harder. If my parents weren't involved, I'm not saying I'd go off rails but I wouldn't be as concerned because there'd be no one to realise I was working hard. (student, School D)

The data showed that students were also very clear about the importance of the value placed upon education by their parents:

Your parents are your main influence, really – if they don't care about it, you don't take as much of an interest in it, do you? (student, School V)

If your parents aren't involved and don't really care, then you don't realise how important it is, and then you just don't turn up to lessons and go downhill and that's it, and you sort of slide downwards. (student, School D)

These comments are important because they highlight the relationship between parents' interest (not necessarily involvement) in their children's education and the respective value the students placed on their learning. All the students in the case-study schools valued and actively wanted their parents (grandparents, carers) to be interested in what they were learning in school.

Behaviour

The data showed that parental engagement had a direct and beneficial effect on student behaviour. Students were clear that if there was no home based consequence to bad behaviour at school, such behaviour would continue. They often spoke of 'getting away' with bad behaviour or the fact that those who were poorly behaved did not 'get punished' at home. Students were clear that communication between home and school on the subject of behaviour influences the way they behave in school and their responses to learning:

If your parents had nothing to do with school, you could skip your lessons and nobody will be bothered; but if your parents are bothered, then if you do something you think it won't be very good 'cause I'll get punished or I'll get my spending money taken off me. (student, School D)

Parents should encourage their kids if they've done something well, because then automatically the kid will want to do better to make their parents proud. (student, School V)

I think it's your parents' recognition – I've lost my certificates now but I still know that my parents were proud that made all the difference. (student, School D)

Students often expressed the view that lack of parental support contributed to the bad behaviour and poor performance of those they termed 'troublemakers'. They also expressed sympathy for those who did not have such support. Parents broadly agreed with young people about the relationship between levels of parental support for education and subsequent behaviour in school:

I'll respect you and you respect me and you don't show me that respect when you're misbehaving at school. (parent, School C)

If the home isn't supportive it can undermine what the school is doing. (parent, School T)

Students also echoed the views of school staff in seeing parental engagement as supporting behaviour policies and promoting behaviour that was conducive to learning. School staff expressed their hope that parents would support school policies – 'singing from the same hymn-sheet' – so that students would receive a unified message:

I think the very fact that a parent is interested makes a huge difference because it just reinforces immediately the sorts of things we're saying in school. (head teacher, School C)

I think it's vital, if the parents not behind the teacher then all our work's in vain and we're really undermined – teaching the child that you've got to respect their teacher. (teacher, School Y)

School staff saw student behaviour as directly related to improved learning. Students, on the other hand, saw parental support for behaviour policies in terms of prevention and cure – they were often clear that if parents enforced penalties (almost always referred to by students as 'punishments') for breaches of school policy, students were more likely to behave:

Yes, because they show that they actually care about you. If she didn't tell me that, I'd misbehave, I'd be out of the house. (student, School N)

Students, in particular, were very clear that parental interest in their education had a direct and positive effect on their in-school behaviour. If students faced parental sanctions for bad behaviour at school, that bad behaviour was far less likely to continue. On the other hand, students often stated that those who flouted school regulations, 'slipped up' or 'fell off the rails' did so with impunity in the home – good behaviour was not reinforced and bad behaviour was not punished.

Barriers

The data revealed that the school itself could have either a positive or a negative effect on parental engagement. Some 'hard to reach' parents felt the school itself was indeed hard to reach. The data highlighted differences between parental perceptions of primary and secondary schools. It showed that parents generally felt that engagement in learning in the

primary school was easier. Their comments revealed that many parents missed the camaraderie of the school-gates and the interaction with other parents that took place in the smaller, more informal primary settings:

Secondary schools, parents aren't as involved. You don't meet at the school-gate. (parent, School O)

I think once they [the kids] get past primary school where you leave them at the door, you lose them [parents] – you see them at parents' evenings but that's about it. (parent, School E)

A number of parents also highlighted the difference between primary and secondary students as a reason for feeling less comfortable in a secondary school:

I find it difficult to come into a high school – I didn't come to this one [as a student], it can be quite intimidating, you come to the office and that's quite intimidating – and you look at the kids as well, I'm not being funny, they're big, they're quite frightening – so I find it quite intimidating coming to a high school. (parent, School D)

I found it quite intimidating to come to a high school and say I have concerns. (parent, School C)

A school which caters to 1000-plus students will always be a large, busy and a potentially imposing place. Analysis of parent comments about the difference between primary and secondary school, however, shows that it is not only the size of secondary schools that parents find intimidating, it is also their complexity, and the number of people to whom parents must relate. Parents commented on the fact that 'in primary school there's only one teacher', whereas in a secondary school there is a confusing mixture of roles and people: form tutors, class tutors, heads of year, senior management team, class assistants.

It is clear that for some parents and students schools feel like a 'closed system' that primarily exists to support teachers over students when there are conflicts of any sort. Further tensions are created when parents and staff hold very different assumptions about the nature, pattern and purpose of family-school interactions. These differences can lead to parental frustration and distrust. The evidence shows that a school's disposition towards parental engagement manifests itself in various ways. Many parents reported that they felt a sense of powerlessness in their interactions with the school. Communication was often by letter or emails which for many parents, particularly those with low literacy, proved to be a major barrier.

'Hard to reach' parents

The data showed that schools were frequently preoccupied with the 'hard to reach' parents – the parents, in the words of more than one head teacher, who 'only comes in when they absolutely have to'. Many schools targeted this group, no matter how small it was in relation to the overall parent body. School staff often equated parents who were 'hard to reach' whether justified or not with under-performing students. A number of schools had put into place special programmes to engage parents of students seen to be 'hard to reach'. Some of these schools were successful in reaching and interacting with this group of parents but many more found their efforts wasted.

The concentration on this 'hard to reach' parental group has two consequences. Firstly, some schools are placing a disproportionate amount of effort getting these parents simply to *interact* with the school. While interaction with the school may be an important first step (particularly if parents lack literacy skills or confidence), the data show this group rarely moves beyond this stage. The second consequence is that by concentrating on the 'hard to reach' parents, schools are neglecting, by default, those parents who are already engaged with the school (parent governors, members of PTFA groups, etc.) and those who were once involved but who have subsequently opted out. As one group of parents involved in an EPRA project, stated:

With disengaged parents there isn't much we can do so what we're concentrating on the parents who are engaged and we are working hard to keep them engaged. (parent, School D)

The evidence from this project and other work (Harris et al. 2007) suggests that schools need to consider how to balance engaging 'hard to reach' parents with keeping parents engaged over time. In short, schools need to consider how to sustain parental engagement once they have secured it.

Commentary

For many schools parental engagement seems to be the worst problem and the best solution. It is the worst problem because it can be difficult to secure and it is the best solution in terms of raising student performance. While it is clear that parents play a vital role in securing better student outcomes, some parents remain reluctant or unable to work with schools. As this research has highlighted, the aspiration of raising achievement can only be fulfilled if parents are engaged in learning. However, it is also clear that differential strategies are needed to secure the engagement of a diverse range of parents.

There is evidence that parental engagement increases with social status, income and parents' level of education. So, certain parents are more likely to engage in learning, while others face certain barriers, influenced by context and culture, which can be wrongly interpreted as resistance or intransigence. Parental engagement is going to be possible with certain groups only if major efforts are made to understand the local community, and if the relationship is perceived to be genuinely two-way (Harris et al. 2007).

The research findings from the EPRA study suggest that parental engagement cannot be a bolt-on extra to be successful, but has to be a central priority. Parents need to be seen as an integral part of the learning process. They need to know they matter. The findings suggest that schools need to support those parents who are already involved in the learning of their children, as well as reaching out to those parents who are not engaged. The staff who work most closely with parents need not be teachers, and schools have to be prepared to be flexible in dealing with parents, in terms of times of meetings (shiftwork, childcare issues) and, if possible, in terms of location. Most of all, schools need to make the shift to encouraging parental engagement in learning *in the home* through providing levels of guidance and support which enable such engagement to take place.

Parents are the most important influence on learning. Long after a child's early years give way to formal education, parents continue to play a key role in student success and achievement. The lives parents lead today means that it is more challenging to secure their engagement in learning, but it still remains the factor that can make a significant difference to a child's educational attainment and subsequent life chances.

Without doubt, parental engagement in children's learning makes a difference and remains one of the most powerful school improvement levers that we have. However, effective parental engagement will not happen without concerted effort, time and commitment of both parents and schools. It will not happen unless parents know the difference that they make, and unless schools actively reinforce that 'all parents matter'.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for allowing us to draw upon the EPRA work, and to Kirstie Andrew-Power for all her support during the research phase.

Notes

1. The term 'parents' is used in this paper to include those adults caring for children – i.e. who have the direct responsibility for the safety and well-being of young people.
2. More information can be found at: <http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/raisingachievement/engagingparents/default.aspx>
3. The schools in the research phase of the project included 29 comprehensive schools and one grammar school; all but one school were mixed gender; and 18 schools covered the 11–16 age range, while the remainder covered the 11–18 age range. Schools ranged from small (just over 180 on roll) to very large (over 1800 on roll); 24 schools were in urban settings, with six in rural situations. The percentage of BME students in schools ranged from zero to 81%.
4. Supporting parents to help their children learn, personalising provision for parents as learners, IReporting and enhancing pastoral care.
5. A total of 95 members of school staff, 81 parents, 124 students and 14 others (including governors and members of outside agencies working with schools); there were 314 respondents in total; 79 hours of interviews were recorded.
6. For a full account of the findings see Harris and Goodall (2007).
7. Quotations from interviews are given with the role of respondents, and a letter symbol for each school. Thus, responses coded as 'School A' will be from one school, and those coded 'School B' from a different school.

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Appendix 1. Respondents, by category

	Head teachers	Deputy head teachers	Assistant head teachers	Teachers	(Staff total)	Parents	Students	Others	Total
Phase 1	8	8	13	26	55	28	37	3	123
Phase 2	9	7	4	20	40	53	87	11	191
Total per category	17	15	17	46	95	81	124	14	314