



Partnership with Parents and Carers Policy

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Bognor Regis Nursery School

Partnership with Parents and Carers Policy

1. Introduction

Staff are committed to building effective partnerships with parents and carers to support children's well being and to enable them to thrive in the School. There is a wealth of research evidence which demonstrates that parents who are more engaged in the work of schools are more likely to understand the importance of education and to help their children to achieve their academic potential.

2. Aims and Objectives of Partnership

The School aims to:-

- provide a welcoming, inclusive environment where trust and respect is fostered;
- appreciate the key role of parents and carers in the education of their children and to learn from their expertise and experience;
- establish and maintain the best possible working relationships with all parents and carers, including those that are traditionally hard to reach both individually and as a group;
- demonstrate to parents and carers that we understand that their ongoing role in the education of their children is of utmost importance and to offer a wide range of support opportunities if parents/carers feel that they would benefit;
- give parents and carers the confidence to extend their knowledge of how children learn, how they play and develop friendships and how their language develops;
- exchange information on the children's development and progress on an ongoing basis;
- help parents to become more effective at supporting their children's play and language development;
- consult on difficulties pertinent to the children's education and well being with other appropriate agencies with the consent of parents/carers;
- help parents/carers to become confident advocates for their babies and young children as they move through the educational system;
- encourage parents' and carers' full participation in the life and workings of the School.

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualities of the staff

- The School recognises the particular qualities that staff need to build successful partnerships with parents/carers. These include:
 - respect:** valuing parents/carers as individuals, believing in their fundamental ability to cope and make a difference in their family lives and working within an ethos of partnership;
 - empathy:** showing an understanding of the challenges parents are facing in their lives and being able to see the situation from their point of view;
 - genuineness:** being sensitive, honest, undefensive and trustworthy;
 - humility:** working in the context of an equal relationship and using parents'/carers' strengths, views and knowledge alongside those of practitioners at every stage of the process;
 - quiet enthusiasm:** bringing a friendly, positive energy to the relationship and a consistent, calm, steady and warm approach;
 - personal integrity:** in addition to empathising with parents/carers, being able to hold alternative views and offer these when appropriate;
 - expertise:** the knowledge and experience that the practitioner brings to the work to complement the parents'/carers' existing knowledge and skills, both in building the relationship and in providing information and support.

3.2 The parents'/carers' and the child's introduction to School

- Parents and carers are encouraged to visit the School and/or Orchard Room before seeking a place and discussion with staff about practice is encouraged. Parents and carers receive summary introductory information leaflets about the philosophy and the work of the School and Orchard Room (*Appendix 1 and 2*).
- Parents and carers are visited in the family's home by their child's keyworker to discuss their child's development and interests. They also complete the "All About Me" section of their child's Learning Journal.
- Prior to entry, parents and carers visit with their children in order to familiarise themselves with the School and to start to build up a relationship with their child's key persons.
- Every Parent/Carer is given the School Booklet (*Appendix 3*) or Orchard Room Booklet (*Appendix 4*) when their child starts, which builds on the information about the workings of the School.
- An information leaflet on the importance of maintaining their family's heritage language (*Appendix 5*) and some of the key Makaton signs that we use (*Appendix 6*) are also shared during the home visits.
- Additional leaflets on supporting early Reading and Writing (*Appendix 7 and 8*) and Numeracy (*Appendix 9*) are shared with parents of children attending Nursery School at the "six weeks in" meetings.
- When children start School or the Orchard Room, they are allocated to a key person. This member of staff settles individual children and spends time with their parents/carers talking about the child's interests, development and background in general. Staff use this information to plan an appropriate curriculum for each child (see Curriculum Planning Policy and Orchard Room Policy). Key persons are paired so that children (and their parents) build a close bond with a second member of the team.

- Parents and staff also confer on the duration and style of the child's "settling in" period, recognising that each child's needs are different.
- Parents are supported to understand their crucial role in their child's education and that learning can happen anytime and anywhere for example through:
 - being generous with praise and cuddles;
 - reading things together;
 - playing games and singing nursery rhymes;
 - talking about what you can see in the park or on the street;
 - counting things such as the stairs as you go up and down.

3.3 Ongoing Liaison with Parents

- After about half a term's attendance parents/carers in the Nursery School are invited to a paired key worker session to give an opportunity to find out more about the philosophy and to ask any questions about practice that they might have ("six weeks in" meeting). A short information leaflet is also distributed at this time "Supporting Young Children's Play" (*Appendix 10*).
- Parents and staff exchange information on children's progress throughout their period in School and the Orchard Room. A final record of each child's achievements is shared with parents before being given to staff in the children's next educational placement.
- The School and Orchard Room continue to inform parents on their approaches and other matters of educational interest through:
 - **Notice Boards** displaying information and photographs relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, together with topical articles relating to early years education and care;
 - **Newsletters** which list forthcoming events, important dates and sometimes résumés of the children's experiences;
 - **Displays** of photographs and information on the educational significance of the workshop areas;
 - **Parent governor information** on their role and the workings of the School and Centre is posted on the parents' notice board and the website;
 - **Copies of all School Policies** displayed in the parents'/community room;
 - **Articles and Leaflets** on young children's development and other pertinent issues such as the appropriate time for a child to start Infant/Primary School (*Appendix 11*) are sent home to parents/carers;
 - **The School website** containing useful information about the School's ethos and approach.

3.3 Parents working alongside Staff in the school and in outside activities

- The staff encourage parents and carers to involve themselves in the day to day life of the School. Efforts are made to maintain a friendly welcoming atmosphere and approaches are made directly and by way of written information.

- The School has a parents'/community room which provides a base for courses and social experiences.
- Children of the School come from varying ethnic backgrounds. Parents are encouraged to participate in the provision of a curriculum which reflects the richness of our community's cultural diversity.
- Staff, parents, and children regularly participate together in outings and educational visits. These provide shared experiences, offer opportunities for parents to contribute to the curriculum, and enable staff and children to benefit from parents' knowledge and contacts in the community.
- Staff and parents work alongside each other in working parties that have been organised to complete projects such as planting up the garden.

3.4 Fundraising

- Parents, staff and governors participate in fundraising activities throughout the year, e.g. the Christmas Raffle and the Easter Egg Raffle. Everyone recognises the financial value of these events, in resourcing elements of the work of the School and in providing positive feelings of community cohesion, striving towards the same goals.
- Parents, staff and governors collect vouchers from local supermarkets and tokens from food packages which are exchanged for educational equipment and books.

3.5 Consultation and involvement in management

- Parents are involved directly in the management of the School through their elected representatives on the governing body.
- Parents' comments/observations are invited on the School's Policy documentation and they are actively sought when new policies are developed.
- Questionnaires are used to gain parents'/carers' views on a range of key issues and on the effectiveness of the provision on an annual basis.
- Parents'/carers' views are used to develop priority areas for development and these are shared more widely through newsletters and notice boards.

4. Evaluation

Elements of this Policy are evaluated formally as indicated in the Strategic Integrated Development Plan. Ongoing monitoring is conducted by the Coordinator.

Criteria for monitoring vary according to the subject. Progress is monitored through feedback from parents, by the perceptions of both parents and staff, and where possible by the use of objective criteria such as the level of satisfaction gauged through the use of questionnaires and fundraising, and the numbers of parents working informally in the School environment.

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NB. Please ask your child's Keyworker for access to the leaflets above.

Bilingualism: Frequently Asked Questions

Is it an advantage to speak more than one language?

Yes. Bilingualism helps children's learning because they can think about their ideas in both languages. They can communicate with more people in their community and internationally and understand different cultures. They stay connected to their family, so they feel secure in their identity and have more self-confidence. This helps them do well at school. They can learn other languages more easily and have more job opportunities in the future.

Is it true that all bilingual children start to speak later than monolingual children?

There is no evidence that bilingual children learn to speak later. Some children, whether bilingual or monolingual, learn to speak later than others.

Should parents speak their mother tongue at home?

Yes. If children know their first language well, it will help them learn English. When they first understand an idea in their first language (such as numbers or colours), they easily pick up the English word that means the same thing. They also know how to use grammar and vocabulary in their first language, so they can quickly work out what is similar or different about the English language.

Isn't it better for parents to speak English instead?

No. It's very important that parents use the language they know best and feel most comfortable in. This is how they can help children develop language, talk about ideas and learn about the world. A child benefits from learning a language from their parents if the parents are confident in that language. A child who develops good use of mother tongue is more likely to develop good English. But if parents use English instead, children will lose their mother tongue. Neither language will progress and the child can have problems in both languages.

Parents often find their children refuse to speak their first language at home and insist on speaking English. What should they do about this?

Children quickly find out that English is the most powerful language in our society and they often pick up the message that other languages are less valuable. Schools, Children Centre's and family learning tutors can help by emphasizing the importance of mother tongue. Explain to parent that they need to keep speaking their first language, even if their child answers in English. Children will understand what has been said and continue learning the language. Parents can also tell stories and sing songs with their children, borrow books in their language from the library, and watch TV programs talk about them together. They can take their children to community language classes and social events so they can meet others who speak their language. Visiting family back home gives children a strong motivation to communicate with cousins and grandparents. Although it may be hard work to keep up the first language, children will thank their parents when they are older and they understand the advantages of being bilingual!

Some parents say they are not teaching their child their family's language, because they want them to learn English first.

Many parents say this. It is important to remember that the younger a child is the easier it is to learn a language. Also many children feel left out in their families when everyone is speaking a language they cannot understand. Children in this situation also miss out on all the advantages of bilingualism and can develop serious identity problems as they grow up.

Some children tell their parents not to speak their language to them in the school playground or in public.

Children who are not encouraged from very young to feel proud of their language and culture can feel like this. Also children who are teased at school may feel embarrassed. The school should be encouraged to see bilingualism as an extra skill which the child has. She or he should be praised publicly for using it. Some children respond very well to being told of the advantages of being bilingual. Attending classes at a community language school can also help children to feel much more positive about their bilingualism.

What about children who have speech problems and are seeing a speech therapist? Should parents stop speaking their first language at home and only speak English (even if their English is not very good)?

There is no difference that bilingualism will make it harder for children with speech problems to develop speech. If the family stops speaking their language to a child who already has a speech problem there is a possibility that the child will become more isolated and unable to speak. If communication in the family is difficult in English, this can only add to the problems. A child with speech problems needs to be surrounded by people who feel confident in their use of language so that she has positive role models. Some researchers in this field even think that bilingualism can be very positive for these children.

If a child is growing up with two languages (for example, Cantonese and English) and she sometimes uses English words when speaking Cantonese or vice versa, is she confused?

Children will use words that they know rather than not saying anything at all. For instance if a child knows the word for 'ice-cream' in one language and not the other she will use the word in the language she knows rather than not ask for an ice-cream at all. The child is not confused; she is simply making use of all the language she has.

Taken from *Bilingual Children; a guide for parents and carers*, written by Foufou Savitzky, London Language and Literacy Unit, South Bank University, 1994. Copies of this booklet are available from Avanti Books, phone 01 438 3500155, email avantiord@aol.com

and share *Our Languages* family learning report. www.ourlanguages.org.uk

Bognor Regis Nursery School

Supporting Young Children's Play

- When children are playing look out for opportunities to introduce new words and ideas without trying to take over their play
- Think out loud, asking questions and posing problems: “I wonder what would happen if.....?”, “How could I?”, “Is there any way to.....?”
- Encourage children to talk about what they are doing, sharing their ideas and thoughts.
- Offer help and support when asked for it, again being careful not to take over an activity a child is involved in. Often this can just mean offering to hold something to assist the child in what he/she is doing.
- Encourage children to be independent by making a wide range of open-ended resources available to them. This means they can choose what to play with and then combine different things as they explore and investigate.
- Encourage children to play out of doors as well as indoors, even if the weather is wet.
- Try to give children the time they need to become fully absorbed in their play.
- Use every day opportunities to enable children to begin to see the world from other's view points and to take responsibility for their own actions.
- Encourage children to handle toys and resources carefully and to help to tidy them away when they have finished playing.
- Watch and listen carefully to see what children are interested in and find ways to build on these interests.

