




November 2020


Supporting collaboration with parents in primary schools


Schools have always recognised the need for effective communication and collaboration with parents and, since March 2020, they have been very creative and adaptable in facilitating this. As the 2020/2021 school year progresses, it remains important that schools continue to work in partnership with parents. In particular, schools will need to be ready to provide alternative means of conducting parent-teacher meetings, including meetings with parents of children with special educational needs (SEN). They may also adapt their usual methods for open days and parental involvement in education. The details below provide some ideas for supporting schools in these endeavours and are based on practice that has already been developed in schools in the past six months. Special schools may choose to use the approaches outlined in either the Primary or Post-Primary school guidance documents on collaborating with parents/guardians or a combination of both.

Parent-teacher meetings, including support plan meetings for children with SEN

Yearly parent-teacher meetings are important to update parents on pupil progress, to share successes and concerns and to support parents in helping their children to learn. Regular meetings with parents about support plans for children with SEN will also continue to be important this year. Relevant information, including draft plans and samples of work, can be sent to parents in advance of meetings using email or the school's digital platform in order to facilitate discussion. Schools may choose to schedule their regular parent-teacher meetings for later in the school year this year. As public health advice recommends reducing social contacts, the following methods could be used in place of the usual face-to-face meetings:

 Video-conferencing facilities can be used in place of face-to-face meetings, where available.

 Parent-teacher meetings can be conducted by phone if video-conferencing facilities are not suitable.

 A written report in addition to the end-of-year report could be provided mid-year, with a follow-up call offered.

Open days



Some schools provide open days during the school year. Instead of inviting parents into the school building, the following ideas could be used to give current and prospective parents an insight into school life:



Short videos celebrating the work of the school



Information booklets outlining various aspects of school life



The school website to showcase the work of the school

Facilitating parental involvement



Schools can use digital platforms such as Seesaw, Google Classroom, emails to communicate with parents.



Parents can be supported in helping their children to learn from home, with resources and guidance provided by the school.



Parents can be invited to contribute to learning via video link, for example, show and tell, story time demonstrations.