



Oxgangs Primary PC - Engagement Group Report (Richard Imlach)

The Engagement Group is a newly formed subgroup of the Parent Council which was formed in the second half of the year. It is widely accepted that positive parental engagement leads to greater success for your child in their education. Oxgangs PS already do a lot to encourage engagement through initiatives such as the current Maths week, or meetings outlining internet safety. The purpose of the subgroup is to understand if we can support the school further and help develop greater engagement between the school & the parent community.

Firstly, the definition of what distinguishes Parental Involvement & Parental Engagement.

Parental Involvement : Generally defined as participation in school activities. Common activities include helping with school trips, class helpers, attending assemblies, helping with school fundraisers, coming to parent's nights, getting involved in PTA/PC, and such like. Oxgangs PS has always promoted parental involvement, and has been very successful in this area.

Parental Engagement : Parental engagement consists of partnerships between families, schools and communities, raising parental awareness of the benefits of engaging in their children's education, and providing them with the skills to do so. There is an important distinction between involving parents in schooling and engaging parents in learning. It is the latter that has shown to have the greatest positive impact. While involving parents in school activities may have an important community and social function, the key to facilitating positive change in a child's academic attainment is the engagement of parents in learning outcomes in the home.

Parental engagement provides an opportunity for all families to be involved in their child's learning outcomes. All families, regardless of work obligations, income level or access to technology, can participate. Simple steps such as asking about a child's day or establishing a time and place for homework go a long way towards teaching kids to work hard and value the opportunities school gives them

Engagement is not just about getting better marks in test, it can help with other areas of pupil development such as :

- more regular school attendance
- better social skills
- improved behaviour
- better adaptation to school
- a greater sense of personal competence and ability for learning
- greater engagement in school work
- a stronger belief in the importance of education

Oxgangs PS already do a lot of work to bring the school and parent community together through engagement. Parentmail is used effectively, as is Twitter. Initiatives such as the current Maths Week and last years curriculum evening on internet safety are other examples. What the PC are keen to do this year is to understand & assist with any further opportunities to help develop this important relationship.

Helping the school with engagement should be a longer term strategy for the PC. To help grow engagement, it may well be beneficial for the PC to propose & organise a number of involvement activities to help strengthen the relationship between the school & the parent community. These should complement or grow involvement activities the school already offer.

So what has the engagement group done so far? It is very early days.

1. Proposed a change from PC & PTA to that of a Parent Community. Gives a softer feel to the Parent Council – clarity in that the PC is there to support a community. Helps people to understand the purpose of the community.
2. Discussed themes & opportunities for how to increase engagement – this is ongoing.
3. Discussed tasks for growing engagement through involvement
4. Brought kids & parents together to create a movie to outline the benefits of engagement & involvement in your child's education. This video was shown at the "Meet the Parents" evening in Sept 2017.

What are the next steps?

1. Understand the needs of the school with respect to engagement. What opportunities are there for the PC to help?
2. Last year the school encouraged parents to climb their house hill with their children. Opportunity to grow this into a group activity for each house at the weekend. If the odd teacher could come along, all the better – helps build & grow relationships. Is an activity for both child & parents.
3. Grow the movie making opportunity – get more parents involved in making a video with the kids centered around engagement themes – ie helping with homework, helping with learning, health & wellbeing, etc.
4. Remote involvement. Can the PC help enhance the communication channels to families.
5. Get feedback using polls, surveys, etc (digital/non-digital)
6. Channel more representation & consultation across the year groups into the PC to understand areas for development – the needs of a P1 are vastly different from the needs of a P7.
7. There are many more opportunities.....ideas, inputs, and help from parents will provide these.

There is a wealth of material & research available on this topic. Feel free to get in touch through the PC, or directly to myself if there are questions, or indeed if anyone is keen to get involved!

Richard Imlach
12 Sept 2017