



10 COMMON BARRIERS TO PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Practitioners can benefit from developing positive partnerships with parents and families by involving them in all decisions affecting their child's education and learning. Their support can play a vital role at all stages of education. Unfortunately, all too often, parents become disengaged with the school and may even appear disinterested in their child's education. In reality, this rarely is the case: instead, parents are falling foul of common barriers which prevent them from fully engaging with the school. So, what are the 10 common barriers and what can you do to overcome them?

1 UNPLEASANT MEMORIES OF SCHOOL

Many parents can be reluctant to engage with their child's school because they have such difficult memories of their own time at school. Open, friendly staff who communicate positively with parents can help to break down these barriers, though it can be hard to encourage the first step. Sometimes holding informal, fun events aimed at bringing parents into school can help to bridge the gap.

2 DON'T WANT TO MAKE A FUSS

Parents speaking to teachers can be a real no-no for a lot of kids. They think their parents are stirring up trouble and making a fuss. The only way to get around this barrier is to slowly chip away at the entire ethos of school-parent relationships at your school until everyone can understand that regular communications between teachers and parents is normal and helpful.

3 ONLY GET INVOLVED IF THERE'S A PROBLEM

Many parents wouldn't dream of contacting the school unless there was an issue with their child. Again, this barrier can only be broken down by trying to address the ethos of home-school communications. Parents should be encouraged to understand that they can always drive their child's achievements further, even when they are already doing well.

4 INFREQUENT SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Many parents hear very infrequently from the school, in the form of an occasional newsletter. In terms of actually hearing information about their child, it may be limited to one report and one parents evening a year. That's not a useful dialogue. Think about how you can usefully increase the frequency of your communications with parents, and how you can make it a two way conversation.

5 CAN'T GET INTO SCHOOL

Many parents work long hours and aren't available to get into school during school hours. Whilst they might be able to attend the occasional parents evening, this is unlikely to sufficiently engage them. You can get around this by allowing parents virtual access to your school. Class blogs highlighting good work done by pupils or a regularly updated school website can be a great start.

6 PARENTS' EVENINGS ARE A NIGHTMARE

Smaller more focussed parents' evenings can often be far more successful and enjoyable for both parents and teachers – though obviously this also means there are more of them. If you don't want to extend the number of events, think of ways to get things really organised and stick to it. A strict appointment system can work.

7 LEAVE TEACHING TO QUALIFIED TEACHERS

A lot of parents, especially those who may have struggled in school themselves, just don't see themselves as able to help their child to learn. This isn't the case though. Even if their child gets to a point where they are learning beyond a level that their parents are comfortable with, that their parents are comfortable with, they are still able to help. Some schools run very successful programmes teaching parents how best to support their children.

8 NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ACT ON

Even if you only communicate with parents infrequently, you need to ensure that you do it effectively. Often simply schools end up reporting – telling parents what their child has achieved. This is great from an information point of view but it doesn't help engage the parent in their child's learning. Instead, think about not only what a child has achieved but what their next aims are – can you think of any ways that parents could support this at home? If so... tell them explicitly.

9 LANGUAGE BARRIER

An increasing number of parents do not speak English as a first language so they are unable to understand communications from the school. When it comes to things like parents evenings you can invite some of your older students in to act as translators (this can be great work experience).

10 DON'T UNDERSTAND THE JARGON

Even those parents who are fluent in English can have trouble understanding some communications from the school. Always think carefully when communicating with parents and ensure that you don't use the jargon you might use with your colleagues.

HOW CAN GCSEPOD HELP?

GCSEPod is the ideal resource to help engage parents. We understand how important it is for parents to support their child during their GCSEs, so we've created a page full of useful advice, guidance and resources, especially for parents.

- ✓ GCSEPod makes it easy for parents to understand the subject content their child is learning, regardless of curriculum changes.
- ✓ Parents can login to track and monitor their child's homework, usage and easily see areas in which they might be struggling.
- ✓ Even if your school doesn't subscribe yet, we support parents with a range of free resources to help their child.
- ✓ They can monitor a student's progress throughout the year with our built-in reporting.
- ✓ Our support team is on-hand to help and answer any questions especially during holidays when the school is not available.

Visit: www.gcsepod.com/parents for more information.

"I can genuinely say that my daughter could not have managed without GCSEPod. I only wish that I'd known about GCSEPod when her GCSEs began, as I know that if she'd used it to reinforce her learning after each topic area, the impact would have been even greater."

Lisa Chappell, Parent