



Parents in Partnership:

Measuring the contribution and potential impact of parental participation in primary school education.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Nottinghamshire Trent University for the Professional Doctorate.

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Abstract

This research, sitting in the heart of my professional practice, brings a significant contribution to knowledge through the refinement and application of what I am calling 'parent partnership descriptors'. These descriptors enable measurements to be taken to explore the correlation between the strength of the partnership and the child's academic progress and life chances. The degree to which the partnership between parents, the school and the child's education positively influences outcomes are debated at length (Campbell 2010; Goodall 2011; Grayson 2013 and Vincent 2017). In addition, literature on the subject acknowledges that the ability to quantify the effect of this partnership on pupils' outcomes is lacking (Desforges 2003 and Hill and Taylor 2004). Most parents want their children to succeed but not all have the ability to support this process. The research has identified that if you share the expectation of what can be achieved with parents and then provide the support to enable this to happen, pupils have the opportunity to succeed.

In this research, findings from database analysis, interviews, questionnaires, documentary analysis and case studies provide a correlation between the level of partnership with the school and academic outcomes. There have been three aspects to this research. The first explores the relationship between parents' involvement with the school and the child's learning and academic progress. The second aspect involving a longitudinal study, identifies a correlation between parental partnership at primary school and the need for specialist services as pupils move through secondary school. The final and innovative aspect of this research has been to use the descriptors to identify families who need additional support in order to improve the partnership, pertinent to their needs (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011). Consequently, purposeful intervention is offered for the families who need it most.

Parents in partnership play a significant part in the advancement of the child's education but also life chances post primary school. A disturbing statistic

emerges that those parents who are not actively involved in the learning process compromise the child's education and future social and educational development. The research, as it stands, reveals evidence of a need for an effective partnership that contributes to academic progress at primary school and in turn impacts on life chances of children during adolescence and young adulthood. The research leads to evidence-informed recommendations for policy makers and school leaders.

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Dedication and acknowledgements

Dedication

To every teacher who ever believed in me.

To every parent who allowed me to work with them and their children.

To every child who allowed their individual spark to be ignited.

To my friends for being my friends.

To my boys, all five of you, you are such a big part of my life and to our beautiful Grandson Ollie, you have inspired me to make a difference for your generation.

To my incredibly talented mum, who always looks out for me and to my dad who is never afraid to challenge and has lived this journey with me.

To my loyal and patient husband; I would have given up without your support.

To you all - we did it!

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Thank you to the Local Authority and their data analysts for the hours of commitment in providing information pertinent to the research.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This research stems from 25 years of working in education. My passion for supporting pupils to achieve their very best sits at the core of this research. The most important resource to achieving educational success for pupils is their parents. Consequently, as an educator, building positive working relationships with parents is as important as the time invested in building positive working relationships with pupils. This belief is the driving force for my research.

Partnership working in order to improve life chances for children is nothing new. The concept of improving equalities for children from a variety of different backgrounds has been central to many policy reviews (DfE 2007; DfE 2008; DfE 2009 and Goodall and Vorhaus 2011). The journey through education and into adulthood is not straightforward for many children and questions are often asked as to what could have been done differently (Harris and Goodall 2007; Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012 and Grayson 2013). The approach adopted for my research, simply starts at the beginning, assessing the potential impact that parents can have on the flight path for their children.

I have researched the impact of parental engagement on outcomes for children since studying at Master's level, commencing in 2009. As a result, I do not approach this subject impartially. It is a primary factor in the educational development of pupils in preparing them for the next stage in their education, training and indeed adult life. Findings from my earlier research resulted in the 'The Partnership Factor' (Chambers 2012, p.38, u.p). It is expressed diagrammatically, as a triangulation between parents, the school and educational policy.

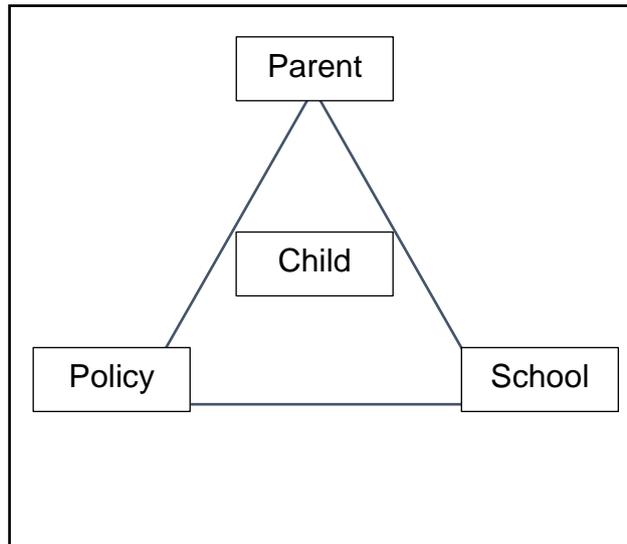


Figure 1 - The Partnership Factor (Chambers 2012, p.38, u.p)

The Partnership Factor, once identified, became a core aspect of my leadership role at Earl primary school, which is a pseudonym. The final paragraph of this early research stated.

The findings of this research have a number of implications for 'The Primary School' in order to improve progress, attainment, experiences and life chances for all of the children and I am in a privileged position to ensure that this will happen.

(Chambers 2012, p.45, u.p)

This conclusion led to action and the need to improve parental partnership became a school improvement key issue. A group of pupils were at Earl primary school during the initial research. They have been tracked as they have moved through secondary school in order to explore the potential impact on life chances. The chronology of my research is presented in a diagrammatical form.

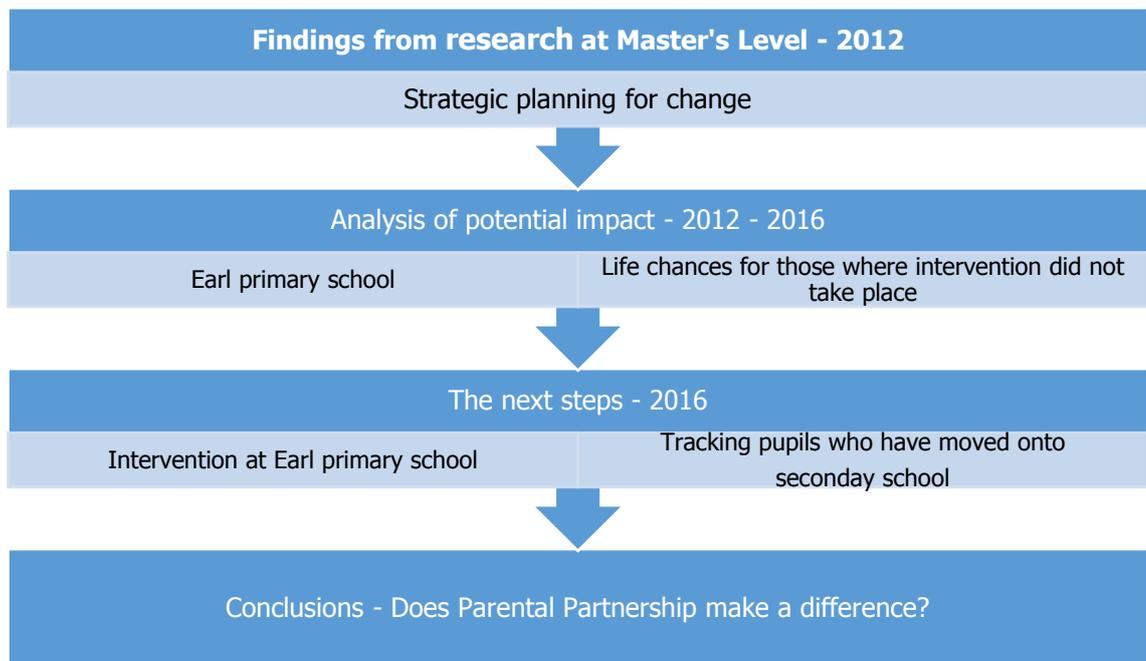


Figure 2 - An overview of pupils who have formed part of the research

The originality of my research stems from the ability to measure the partnership between the school and parents. This has been made possible through the creation of the Parent Partnership Descriptors (PPDs). The PPDs were initially generated in partnership with parents and professionals (teachers and teaching assistants) who work on a daily basis with children (Chambers 2012, u.p). They have been developed as part of the doctoral research and have since been consistently applied across school to categorise the partnership with parents. These categories reflect the degree of partnership, both working with the school and most importantly, engaging in their child's learning. The descriptors go some way to signpost the need for earlier intervention (Reay 2017), before it is too late.

A clarity of definition, at four levels, from Parent Group A (PGA) down to Parent Group D (PGD), provides the opportunity for parents and professionals to identify gaps in the partnership. Historically there has been a lack of agreement on what parental partnership looks like (DCFS 2008). This is a notable step forward for educational leaders, as it provides a tool to identify the barriers to the partnership and the opportunity to develop these areas. They also provide a consistency of

definition across schools, something which to this point has been lacking (Hill and Taylor 2004 and Harris and Goodall 2007).

The Parent Partnership Descriptors categorise the level of partnership parents have with the school and the child's learning. Each category contains a 'best fit' set of statements. In order to ensure that instructions for staff, when categorising the partnership were clear, additional explanations were added as part of this research. The descriptors formed part of the training for leaders and staff at the additional schools involved in the research. In order to ensure clarity each of the descriptors is shown below.

Parent Group A:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Go 'above and beyond' expected support for their child and the school ✓ are regularly in school (weekly) ✓ are actively involved in the life of the school, contributing to school events ✓ always attend parents' evening and welcome meetings ✓ regularly support with homework and communicate about this support ✓ often includes extended family involvement ✓ can be deemed as demanding or 'high profile' not always in a positive way.
Parent Group A - detail for clarification
"Above and beyond expected support". <i>An example of this is bringing things in to support learning, without being asked, or knowing that a different class is doing a craft activity and bringing a dozen boxes in.</i>
"Regularly supports" <i>As a school we class regular support as 2 – 3 times weekly</i>
"Often includes extended family involvement" <i>We know and work with the grandparents, who will also collect the children and do homework with them and attend school events.</i>
"Can be deemed as demanding" <i>Whilst the parent may think they are supporting their child, sometimes requests are in excess (i.e. wanting to speak with the teacher on a daily basis) OR expectations are unrealistic (i.e. requesting 1:1 support)</i>

Figure 3 - PGA detailed explanation

Parent Group B:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Respond almost always to requests for support for the child and the school ✓ are often in school ✓ are involved in the life of the school, on request will support school events ✓ attend parents' evening and welcome meetings the majority of the time ✓ usually support with homework and often communicate about this support ✓ can include extended family involvement (eg. if parents are working) ✓ work effectively with the school and demonstrate an understanding of its work.
Parent Group B - detail for clarification
<i>"Respond almost always" 9 times out of 10 and there is usually a good reason if the support is not there</i>
<i>"often in school" Once a fortnight they will make a point of speaking with the teacher/head teacher</i>
<i>"majority of the time" 9 times out of 10 and there is usually a good reason if they do not attend</i>
<i>"usually support with homework and often communicate about this support" Will support with homework on a weekly basis and write in the home/school diary when this has happened</i>
<i>"Can include" For some families we will see grandparents and they are involved in the education of the child</i>
<i>"work effectively with the school and demonstrate an understanding..." The partnership work is positive because they value our expertise and respect our decisions</i>

Figure 4 - PGB detailed explanation

Parent Group C:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do little to support their child's learning and very little to support the school ✓ are occasionally in school (if it suits their agenda, i.e. a complaint) ✓ will attend school events with their child occasionally ✓ will attend parents' evening after persuasion or a specific request ✓ occasionally support with homework often after prompting ✓ will say that it is the school's job to educate therefore do not recognise the importance of their involvement in extending the learning beyond school.
Parent Group C - detail for clarification
<i>"Do little to support their child's learning and very little to support the school"</i>
<i>"Occasionally" 1x half termly (every 6 weeks)</i>
<i>"persuasion" "after prompting" Means that letters have been sent out reminding them of the importance and a phone call from the class teacher</i>

Figure 5 - PGC detailed explanation

Parent Group D:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does nothing to support the child's learning or the school ✓ are rarely in school (other than dropping the child off in younger years) ✓ are reluctant to attend school events ✓ will not attend parents' evening and have to be contacted on numerous occasions for this to happen ✓ does not support with homework or extended learning ✓ will occasionally comply when put under pressure but this is not sustained
Parent Group D - detail for clarification
<p>"Does nothing to support their child's learning and very little to support the school" <i>We have no evidence that the parent supports their child and they do not contribute to the school</i></p>
<p>"are reluctant to attend school events" <i>Will use a variety of excuses for not attending</i></p>
<p>"numerous occasions" <i>Will have received a phone call, letter, personal invite, been approached on the playground</i></p>
<p>"Does not support" <i>We have no evidence that the parent supports their child and homework is often not completed</i></p>
<p>"will occasionally comply when put under pressure but this is not sustained" <i>After a formal meeting with the class or head teacher things will change for a week or so only</i></p>

Figure 6 - PGD detailed explanation

The PPDs were part of a variety of research methods, to ascertain whether a positive partnership between parents and the school really does make a difference to life chances for children. The information was used, within this research, to explore possible correlations (Wellington 2015) with the complexity of need of children (or potential risk factors), educational outcomes and any impact on future life chances.

This research will demonstrate how the application of the PPDs can influence outcomes for pupils. The PPDs have the potential to provide a consistent representation of parental participation across schools and local authorities nationally. The ambition is to use the evidence-informed findings from this research to influence educational policy, practice and legislation, in order to

provide support for families in need, at the earliest opportunity. The ultimate goal is to improve outcomes and opportunities for children.

The thesis will begin with an explanation about my role within this research and information about my school and the two other primary schools involved. The literature review will explore the role of parents in education overtime and whether they make a difference to outcomes for their children. I will then present the research questions which will reflect the literature and my professional experience. I will then clarify what parental partnership looks like at Earl primary school and how the research questions evolved. The methodological approach will be explored, with a discussion about each of the methods and how these were chosen to answer the research questions. The findings will be presented under each of the research questions, leading to the final chapter of the conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter 2 – Contextual discussion and process

Contextual discussion

Within this chapter I will introduce myself as a headteacher, professional doctorate student and researcher. I will also introduce the sources of evidence and settings for the research, which will include Earl primary school, Danby Lane primary school, Valeside gardens school (all pseudonyms) and the Local Authority. Finally, I will include a summary of the process of parental partnership at Earl primary school. I have been influenced by the work of Bourdieu (1990); this will be evident throughout the development of my conceptual framework and the literature review.

My career in education began working as a primary school teacher in 1993, before going through the stages of promotion and securing my first headship in 2004. My second headship was to amalgamate two schools to create Earl primary school. I have enjoyed 13 successful years of headship. However, it is experiences beyond that of being a primary school headteacher that led to this research. Time spent working with the early help team, the social care department and the safeguarding trust board, was instrumental in providing an invaluable insight into the issues faced by some of our most vulnerable families. Vulnerable children are those 'who are susceptible to harm' (Demi and Warren 1995, p.188). This echoes my view. I developed a clear understanding of the differing levels of need for families. Within the pathways to provision documentation, the Local Authority provide a clear explanation of the increasing levels of intervention. Level 4, the need for specialist intervention, is referred to throughout this research.

Specialist (Level 4) – Children and young people who are very vulnerable and where interventions from Children's Social Care are required

(NCC 2016, p.16)

This depth of knowledge influenced my understanding of the complexity of needs of children and their families considerably. For the majority of the research, I

have been a serving practitioner in school and as a result have been able to disseminate my work on an ongoing basis, developing both practice and policy simultaneously, within my own school and supporting other leaders nationally. I am currently an education consultant with a focus on school improvement. My current work does not form part of the research.

My role is enriched as a student within the professional doctorate arena. I have developed my role as a researching professional in a supportive environment, 'developing professional practice and identity' (Fulton, et al. 2013, p.131), developing a clarity of approach to my work. I am privileged, as a professional doctorate student, to be able to work with and within the scope of the research. As a researcher, I have been sat at the heart of the research and actively involved. As a headteacher in one of the schools I have been 'a complete participant – an insider' (Merriam and Tisdell 2015, p.161). The position of power and potential bias of my role will be further explored during the methodology section and when discussing each of the methods selected to answer the research questions.

Much of this research relates to Earl primary school, where I was headteacher for nine years. It is an average-sized primary school with a catchment area serving a broad mix of socio-economic backgrounds. Ninety-seven percent of pupils attending the school were of White British heritage. Since 2009, parental partnership has formed part of the school improvement agenda. Consequently, Earl Primary has actively worked to improve parental partnership, with interventions in place to support families with a complexity of need.

Earl primary school database provided the information to analyse educational outcomes and the risk factors for children (for example whether a child lives in an area of deprivation) and their families, in order to provide appropriate support. Parents at this school have played a significant part in raising the profile of parental partnership and their views will be considered as part of the research.

In addition to the current information for the children at Earl primary school, historical information was used to assess whether parental partnership had any correlation with outcomes as children move towards adulthood. This was made possible through working closely with the Local Authority who were able to provide additional information.

Two additional primary schools were involved in the research. Both took part in staff briefings, categorising the partnership and providing data. I worked closely with leaders at Danby Lane primary school and have confidence in the dataset provided. Unfortunately, the same level of confidence does not apply to Valeside gardens database. Although I worked with staff and leaders in this school also, there were many inaccuracies and incomplete spreadsheets when the data was returned. It became apparent that several children in the same class had the same postcode and the explanation was that it could have happened during a copy and paste exercise. This brought to question the rest of the information held within the database. For this reason, it has not been used.

[The partnership process at Earl primary school](#)

The importance of parental partnership at Earl primary school begins before the children start school. Clarity of expectations is key to success. Consequently, the partnership expectations are shared with parents on their first visit when choosing the right school for their child. The clarity of expectation continues when the first formal meeting is held with new parents in the summer before the children start the school. The parent partnership descriptors are available for parents and forms part of the induction alongside the school readiness list.

School readiness
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely
Your child is always in the correct uniform
Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
Your child's homework is always complete and on time
Your child reads regularly at home
Your child practices spellings at home
Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
You attended parents evening
Comments:

Figure 7 - School readiness table shared with parents annually

When children have settled into school both as new starters but also all children as they begin a new academic year, parents are invited in for a 'structured conversation' (DCFS 2009, p.32). This gives parents the opportunity to share what they know about their child and begin to form a positive relationship with the new class teacher. At the end of the first half term in school, staff use the PPDs to categorise the partnership parents have with the school. Once this data has been collated the intervention process can begin. Below is a brief overview of the stages of intervention:

- Stage 1 PGD parents are identified and targeted for intervention.
- Stage 2 Historical and current information about the circumstances of the child and family is considered and informs the process for planning for improvement.
- Stage 3 Parents are invited in to talk. These meetings are an opportunity to listen and to share what is known about the benefits for intervention and working in partnership. Planning for progression, setting targets for both parents and the school – shared accountability.
- Stage 4 A date is set for review and monitoring begins.
- Stage 5 Intervention begins.
- Stage 6 Review and assessment of impact.

Initial intervention, when trying to improve the partnership, takes the form of a transparent discussion between the headteacher and the families targeted for

intervention. Questions are asked and clarity about the difference that parents can make is shared. During the meetings with parents the PPDs and in particular the description for PGD is shared. Parents are asked where they feel they sit within the descriptors and what could be done to improve the partnership. The meetings give parents the opportunity to share their views about aspects of the partnership that could be improved from the school's point of view. This will be further developed in the findings chapter. In addition, there are two very different outcomes for parents. The first is celebrating the strengths of parents and what they can bring to the partnership, the second is the concept of accountability and what is expected of them. It is imperative that parents are made aware of and understand the impact they can have on their child's future.

The meetings present the opportunity to clearly explain what needs to be done in order to achieve success and precision as to what success will look like. Targets are set for the parents and the school and the impact of any changes are monitored closely. The acknowledgement and understanding of how successful early intervention can be for families, contributes to the formation of the research question.

Chapter 3 - Literature review – the Parent Partnership debate

The role of parents within schools has been of political interest for some time, resulting in significant changes in the 1990s (Tomlinson 2001). As a newly qualified infant teacher in the 1990's, regular contact with parents was the norm. I have always worked within the belief that in order to create a conducive relationship with the children, a productive relationship with parents is essential. To be able to combine my teaching experiences and contribute to the field of parental partnership, as part of a professional doctorate has been a positive experience. Combining practice and experiences with literature has been insightful.

The literature review has the following subheadings, reflecting key focus areas within this field of research:

- Definitions, interpretations and measurement – Why partnership is the right definition
- Mapping the partnership
- The potential influence of a partnership
- Barriers to partnership and influential factors
- Educating parents and intervention for families
- The parent partnership debate – concluding comments

Definitions, interpretations and measurement

There is no consistency or clarification about what parental partnership looks like (Hill and Taylor 2004). The words involvement (Harris and Goodall 2007), engagement (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011), partnership (Campbell 2011) and collaboration (Ravn 2001), are used with no real definition of what they mean. Parental involvement is a widely used but ill-defined term, a 'catch all phrase' (Desforges and Abouchar 2003, p.12). The different levels of parental engagement with school is aptly referred to as 'multiple dimensions' by Hill and Taylor (2004, p.162). My own view resonates with that of Harris and Goodall (2007), as they challenge the need for a more accurate definition to describe the differing levels of engagement, exploring what constitutes involvement as

opposed to engagement. There is no agreement on what parental involvement really looks like (DCFS, 2008), while this piece of literature is dated, there has been little development in this field. This means that presently it is difficult to measure or compare.

Consequently, a clear clarification and precise definition is key so as to avoid ambiguity (Pring 2015). The term 'partnership' will be used for the purpose of this study. Davis, Day and Bidmead (2002, p.51) offer 'ingredients of partnership', some of which resonate with my approach. These include; working together with a common aim, power sharing, mutual respect and negotiation. My definition for partnership is a practice whereby professionals and parents work together to a common purpose to achieve improved outcomes for the child. While the PPDs provide clarity as to the levels of partnership for leaders, it is imperative that this involves parents at all stages of the process. Genuine partnership between professionals and families must sustain 'a two-way exchange of information' (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012, p.6). This exchange needs to be an 'equitable dialogue between parents and teachers' (Walker and MacLure 2005, p.98). Working through the PPD stages, the goal is to achieve an effective partnership: a relationship of equals, where both sides contribute and ultimately children and their families benefit. An educational explanation of effective, according to Pring (2015, p.25), would be the production of 'specific outcomes'. The intention of effective partnership with parents is to produce improved and specific outcomes for children.

The challenge is how the potential impact of this partnership can be measured. Measurement is a significant theme of this research and it is based on the identification of a partnership continuum that introduces and defines four stages of the relationship that schools have with parents. Effective strategies for intervention are explored and indeed promoted by Grayson (2013) but measurement of impact is lacking. At present due to the nature of the various levels of involvement, what this means to different settings, and the lack of agreed definitions, it is impossible to compare findings (Hill and Taylor 2004).

The creation of a measurement tool (the PPDs) enables us to identify a relationship between parental partnership with the child's learning and provides a mechanism to identify gaps for intervention. The concept of informed intervention based upon a 'comprehensive needs analysis' is supported by Goodall and Vorhaus (2011, p.10) who claim that outcomes will be more positive if the intervention is clearly focused. Ultimately, the PPDs will be used to identify whether there is any correlation concerning effective partnerships between parents and the school on life chances for children.

Mapping the partnership

The objective of the partnership continuum is to establish the relationship between the varying levels of partnership and the child's progress; this has been identified as an area yet to be explored (Hill and Taylor, 2004). The role of parents is high profile within the school improvement agenda (DfE 2007; DCSF 2008 and Ofsted 2017). In addition, there are authors (Hill and Taylor 2004; Campbell 2011 and Grayson 2013) who advocate successful partnerships between the home and the school and the positive impact that this could have on outcomes for children and families. A key aspect of the PPDs relates to the involvement of the parent in the child's learning. Campbell (2011, p.5) suggests that parental engagement in school should mean 'engagement in learning'. This aspect of the relationship is imperative. Consequently, an informed decision was made to include levels of engagement in learning in each of the groups within the PPDs. The greater the involvement from the parents, the greater success the child will have within the education system (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011) resonates with the vision for this research.

The potential influence of parental partnership for children, their parents and families

The suggestion that parental partnership impacts on a child's progress and academic achievement (DfE 2007; DCFS 2008; Grayson 2013 and Hassink and Levtoy 2016) could be contestable without reference to a defined system of measurement, which takes all other influential factors into consideration. As previously stated, support for parental partnership is a regular feature on the

school improvement agenda. The Department for Education and skills (2007, p.5) use persuasive language such as 'significant impact' and in a later review, 'significant effect' (2008, p.2). They also claim that parents' actions have a 'bigger effect' than the quality of the school (2008, p.5). They suggest that research has repeatedly revealed the positive influence that parental partnership has on how well children achieve (2008, p.3). Ofsted, also report on the impact of parental partnership and its contribution to effective schools. For example, when summarising the work of 'good' schools, Ofsted (2015, p.21) claim that the creation of a partnership with parents is 'a cornerstone of their work'. Ofsted argue that the most successful schools and settings 'worked as much with parents as they did with the children' (2015, p.23). These statements should be challenged. All of these statements lack the statistical evidence base to support what is claimed.

In addition to the school improvement agenda, historical research (Sammons, Thomas and Mortimore 1997; Hill and Taylor 2004 and Hassink and Levtoy 2016) celebrate the impact of parental partnership on life chances for children. For example, '...evidence strongly supports the potential benefits of policies and programs to increase parental school involvement' (Hill and Taylor 2004, p.163). There is however, a dearth of evidence to suggest that policy has been revisited. Contemporary research has been focussed on the importance of working effectively with parents in a specific arena for example, with those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in need of counselling support (Bodvin, Verschueren and Elke 2018). There continues to be little new evidence to provide a correlation between an effective parental partnership and improved outcomes.

The possible influence that a positive relationship with parents might have on educational outcomes for children is key. Critically, the potential impact on parents must also be considered. The realisation that they can make a difference to their children, could have a positive impact on their own confidence (Ofsted 2015). An increase in confidence can improve the home environment for families

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(Grayson 2013, p.3). Increasing social capital for parents, developing skills, knowledge and understanding, will lead to improved outcomes as parents believe that they are 'better equipped' (Hill and Taylor 2004, p.162) to support their own children. Considerable resources are focused on raising the self-esteem of children, yet very little is done to support the self-esteem of parents (Campbell 2011). This will be further explored when interventions with families is discussed (see chapter 6).

There is considerable documented evidence (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011; Campbell 2011; Grayson 2013 and Ofsted 2015) to support the positive educational experiences of a partnership for both the children and the parents. However, literature discouraging the creation of a partnership is limited (Hill and Taylor 2004). Caution is needed when assessing the impact of a partnership, as in isolation; it will not improve outcomes for our children (Apple 1996). Apple's statement should be challenged. Arguably, pupils' outcomes are influenced by many factors but my experience confirms that a partnership with parents is one of them and even in 'isolation', it can make a difference and has been the driving force behind this research. Challenge is also presented by Desforges and Abouchar (2003, p.12), who question whether the activities of 'involvement' make a difference to what children achieve considering that outcomes are influenced by a plethora of factors. Reay (2017) approaches the argument considering the pressure a partnership places on parents. Reay (2017, p.71) states: 'increasing reliance on parental involvement with the British education system is perpetuating educational inequalities'. A clear focus on what intervention will look like, relevant to the needs of the family with a clarity of what we hope to achieve (Grayson 2013) is imperative.

Unsupported claims are challenged within this literature review. It is therefore important to acknowledge the cautious approach used by some academics to the choice of language used. Hill and Taylor (2004) refer to parental partnerships as promoting positive academic experiences. The balance of probability is explored with the inclusion of terms such as 'more likely to succeed' (Goodall and Vorhaus

2011, p.3) and a 'causal influence' is the chosen terminology for Carter-Wall and Whitfield (2012, p.5). There is a suggestion within their claims that they have confidence in their findings, supported with literature reviews and questionnaire evidence bases, while recognising that other influential factors play a part. An understanding of the need to be accurate and selective in the use of terms to describe potential outcomes of parental partnership, has been a significant stage in my professional development as a researcher. Initially persuasive language was used, for example, I would use the term 'positive impact', rather than referring to a correlation. An awareness that it would be and more accurate to suggest that outcomes have been 'influenced' took time. Campbell's approach adequately reflects my own stance within this research:

If we want to improve the life chances of all children, then parents and schools must work in partnership and be involved at every stage of a child's school experience.

(2011, p.6)

[Barriers to partnership and influential factors](#)

Meeting the needs of children and their parents is not an easy task. However, it is the responsibility of school leaders to overcome the barriers in order for the partnership to be accessible by all. Some of our more vulnerable families will possibly have countless social factors providing barriers to their engagement with school (Hill and Taylor 2004). It is imperative to understand the family context. Hill and Taylor go on to state, 'it is unfortunate that parents with children who would benefit most from parental involvement find it the most difficult' (2004, p.162). This section will explore the potential barriers and influential factors which can stand in the way of an effective partnership. Drawing on my professional practice and literature these include:

- Opening the door – the need for an invitation.
- What barriers do parents have which may stand in the way of partnership?
- Are teachers prepared for a partnership?
- Do parents and teachers speak the same language when they do meet?

Clearly the partnership has to begin with an invitation. An invitation tells the parents that they matter and that the teacher needs information from them (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005). Chynoweth (2016), in representing the perspective of parents, suggests that parents are keen to collaborate, they do want to help but they need to be invited in, in order to do so.

Inviting parents into school for workshops is not new (Malcolm, et. al 2003). An example of a workshop is teaching parents how to support their children to learn phonics. Indeed, this formed part of our own intervention plan, ensuring that parents knew the difference between phonemes and graphemes. I would now question if this is helpful to parents who want to be more involved but feel 'on the back foot' (Chynoweth 2016, p.40). I question whether it is helpful to invite parents in to simply reinforce the aspects that they do not know, with language and terminology that they do not understand, potentially 'perpetuating inequalities' (Reay 2017, p.71). Smethurst (2011) acknowledges that some parents can feel 'out of their depth' (p.29), due to the language used and I think that reinforcing this simply adds to the insecurities faced by many and does little to develop a relationship of trust. Reay (2017, p.158) argues that unless the 'diversity among parents' is acknowledged, lack of trust will continue to weaken the parent teacher relationship.

Chynoweth (2016) explores how parents feel in school, suggesting that parents, when they enter school, are in a foreign environment. The claim that, in order for an effective partnership to be created, parents need to feel on equal ground and that can begin with 'a cup of coffee and have a proper chat about how we help' (2016, p.40) resonates with my approach. Meetings held with parents tells me that they do not need to know about phonemes and graphemes, they simply need to know how to support their children.

Some barriers to effective partnership working are identifiable and therefore easier to rectify, however, some are not. Additional risk factors place pressure on families (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Hill and Taylor 2004 and Smethurst 2011) and ultimately their ability to work in partnership with the school. Complexities such as financial deprivation factors as recognised through the allocation of free school meals (FSM) are easy to identify (Department for Education 2017). Provision for a child who has special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is identified through professional assessment (Department for Education and Department of Health 2015). Leaders have a statutory responsibility to respond to these needs and measure any potential impact on progress and attainment. For these areas, leaders are held to account in order to ensure progress and attainment is in line with their peers. Part of this process includes an expectation that parents are involved through meetings and the sharing of the child's targets. This however is not the case when the barriers are not clearly obvious and limits what can be done to support families.

Raising the self-esteem of children is high profile for leaders, yet little is done to raise the self-esteem of parents (Campbell 2011). Campbell claims:

Parents who feel more efficacious and who believe in their capacity to influence their child's performance will exhibit greater involvement in school-related activities.

(2011, p.11)

Efficacy is a key feature of parental resilience. Parents are more likely to 'persist in the face of challenges or obstacles' if they are high in efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005, p.109). Parents also need to understand and have confidence in their ability to be educators (Vincent 2017). Belief and confidence in their own ability can only be positive and it is imperative that school leaders nurture this before it is too late (Reay 2017). Some parents will not have positive memories of their own schooling, Smethurst (2011, p.27) suggests that some parents may be 'traumatised' by their own school experiences.

The debate concerning the interaction between social class and social capital forms part of this research. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p.88) discuss the potential influence of social class. These authors are cautious in this approach, advising that it should not be considered in isolation and acknowledge the impact of additional risk factors. Parents can inadvertently give their children subliminal messages about the importance of schooling, the process of 'inculcating' which Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p.71) claim to be the 'primary principle underlying the inequalities in the academic attainment of children from different social classes'. Hill and Taylor (2004) also suggest that this is linked directly with social capital. Vincent (2017) contributes to the debate, suggesting that the volume of social capital is a significant factor.

Hill and Taylor (2004, p.162) argue that parents from a more affluent background are more likely to establish a positive relationship with the school and indeed, 'lower socio-economic backgrounds may face many more barriers to involvement'. The view of Hill and Taylor resonates with my own findings as does the claim from Grayson (2013, p.2), who argues that 'poorer children and families often have high aspiration, but lack social capital.

There are a number of definitions for social capital, and this needs understanding before deciding whether it presents a barrier to parental partnership. Claridge (2004, p.23) argues, 'social capital does not have a clear undisputed meaning'. Claridge (2004, p.25) then goes on to offer a variety of definitions of social capital from a variety of literature. The common feature is the use of the term network. Bryman (2012, p.21) supports this view with reference to the term 'social connectedness' and the inherent resources that those with social capital can depend on to fulfil aspirations. It is evident that parents are influenced by factors and experiences from their own childhood. This echoes the view of Bryman (2012). The ability to network or create meaningful positive relationships has been a key aspect of the interventions with parents within this

research. For Bourdieu (1990), social capital includes relationships and networks. Working with targeted parents, those in parent group D, it is apparent that there are differing stages of social relationships and the expectations of outcomes vary. Sil (2007) argues that social capital is expressed in the form of parental participation with the school. He goes on to suggest that family and school partnerships are of a greater importance to achieving student success than the composition of the family, levels of parental education and financial implications. This view underpins my research.

A lack of social capital has been identified (Hill and Taylor 2004; Grayson 2013 and Vincent 2017) as a potential barrier for parents to work effectively with the school. Social capital can also reflect the parent child relationship (Bourdieu 1990). Coleman (1988, p.610) explores the interaction between a parent and child as 'a measure of the social capital available to the child from the parent'. The next stage has to be the triangulation of parents building social capital to improve relationships with the child, the child's learning and the school to potentially improve outcomes. Found within theories of Relative Deprivation (Olson, Herman and Zanna 2014), a significant characteristic to the model is that the less that you perceive yourself to have in relation to others in your locality i.e. the catchment area, will be expressed in negative outcomes. Social factors, it is argued, play a big part in the ability of a parent to engage with the school (Hill and Taylor 2004; DCFS 2008 and Smethurst 2011). Habitus, the accepted and expected norms that influence a person's behaviour, is also instrumental in the formation of this relationship (Bourdieu 1990). Developing social capital in parents and changing the mind-set of some groups is a challenge. However, with careful management of change and supporting parents through the process, this can be achieved.

Extending the analysis concerning the relationship between assessed parent groupings and deprivation, another indicator the pupil premium grant (PPG) was considered. Introduced in 2011, the PPG was given to schools each year by the government to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children (Department

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for Education 2017). By way of explanation, the grant is available to disadvantaged children if they are currently receiving free school meals (FSM) or have been eligible for FSM at any point during the last six years. The PPG is also applicable to children who are in the care of the Local Authority, been adopted or subject to a special guardianship order. Potential risk factors, within the primary school database, include PPG, which refers to disadvantaged children who are in receipt of the pupil premium grant.

The attendance of pupils in school is a vital aspect of the partnership (Taylor 2012). Teachers, leaders and parents cannot work effectively together if the child does not attend school. Research into the perception of the importance of good attendance found that children's outcomes improved alongside increased attendance (Handcock, Gottfried and Zubrick 2018). The cause and effect relationship between absenteeism and parental attitude is explored in a research report, conducted across seven education authorities (Malcolm, et al. 2003). They conclude that parents whose children do not attend school regularly do not recognise the importance to the child of being in school. Steps were taken by schools to introduce innovative measures designed to engage parent participation through a range of initiatives for example, providing classes on parenting skills and appointing key staff, for example, family liaison officers. Given the importance of pupil attendance in school, leaders have a responsibility to share this information with parents, whatever the approach might be. Emphasising that the value of good attendance cannot be minimised.

Consideration has to be given to the essential part that teachers have in this partnership. 'The success of collaboration between families, schools and communities depend on the teachers and the schools' (Ravn 2001, p.190). This is not disputed, however, Carter-Wall and Whitfield (2012) question the knowledge, skills or ability of the teaching staff to work with the parents. They suggest that the professional view of 'parental dis-engagement' (2012, p.4) could be more about school staff than the commitment of the parents towards the child's educational development. Partnership cannot be just about the parents

and we cannot assume that all teachers are equipped for this working relationship. A 'two-way exchange of information' leads to an effective partnership (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012, p.6). A commitment from both is imperative. A vital aspect of the relationship is that teachers are open to learn from the parents, demonstrating an understanding of their needs and expectations (Ravn 2001). Once the initial barriers are overcome and a partnership is created, a commitment to the process has to be maintained. This is not always easy, language and the use of terminology can provide a barrier from the first conversation (Hattie 2009 and Pring 2015) and teachers need to be demonstrate an awareness of this. Bourdieu (1990, p.57) refers to the challenges of a common language shared between parents and professionals, reflecting on the 'meaning of the language' and the need for clarity.

Teachers' preconceived ideas about working with parents and what they expect from parents can hinder this process. Preconceived ideas about parents is explored by Sammons et al. (1997) suggesting that social class plays a part. Hill and Taylor (2004, p.163) further develop this and suggest that this can lead to 'substandard treatment of students and of parents'. This concept is contestable, the evidence for such a statement is not clear. Evidence does however, suggest that teachers, during their training, receive little valuable tuition to support the creation and sustainability of positive partnerships (Hattie 2009). Hill and Taylor (2004) claim that developments in this field would be a positive step forward. Previous research in this area supports this suggestion. 'The evidence suggests that preparing students to work with parents is not a high priority for Universities' (Chambers 2012, p.29, u.p). Some teachers struggle with the relationship due to poor training, others have an 'uncertainty' or 'fear of parents' (Ravn 2001, p.190). Preparing staff to improve the ability to work effectively with parents has been a vital aspect of this research.

[Educating parents and intervention for families](#)

Providing justification for why parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the school could be considered an easy option. Leaders have to move on

from simply accepting (or making) excuses and be prepared to face the challenge of working with families for the benefit of the children with actions identified for improvement. In order to ensure that partnership with parents receives high profile, school leaders need to be committed and persistent in their pursuit to include them all (Campbell, 2011). The first step is to ensure that parental partnership forms part of the school improvement agenda, with clarity of what steps will be taken and what the intended impact will be. Partnership has to be more than initiatives and workshops; it has to be a long term plan of intervention. Being part of the improvement agenda ensures that it can be adequately resourced and is sustainable, a point which Grayson (2013) considers to be key. A priority for school improvement should be to 'find strategies to strengthen and support these existing home efforts' (Campbell 2011, p.13). Helping parents to understand that their own actions can indeed improve outcomes (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012). This section will be presented through the stages of managing change used at Earl primary school to improve partnerships and remembering that 'no family, however hard to reach is unreachable' (Grayson 2013, p.2).

In most cases, when a child starts school, parents know the child best and have an abundance of relevant information. Until the point of starting school or nursery, parents have been the primary educators. Given that the child's 'first teacher is their parents' (Ofsted 2015, p.21), we need to influence the thought process of the parents from a very early stage. There are different ways of educating our children and 'wise nurturing by the family' is just one of them (Pring 2015, p.25). From the earliest opportunity, school leaders need to get to know children and their families. It is at this initial starting point that we need to start sharing the potential positive influence that parents can have on the future academic achievement and life chances of their children. For some parents this is the first time that they do not engage and consequently forms part of the identification for targeted intervention process. This group of parents are often deemed as 'hard to reach' Campbell (2011, p.10). Campbell describes this group as those who:

- have very low levels of engagement with the school
- do not attend school meetings nor respond to communications
- exhibit high levels of inertia in overcoming perceived barriers to participation

(2011, p.10)

This definition resonates with Parent Group D (PGD), the group least involved with the education of their child (see figure 6).

This group of parents are often the parents who most need our support (Hill and Taylor 2004) and faced with a plethora of issues creating barriers to the partnership. For some families, there is considerable work to do, however, through an understanding of the needs of these families, a plan can be formulated. This is supported by Goodall and Vorhaus, who claim:

Parental engagement interventions are more likely to be effective if they are informed by a comprehensive needs analysis and are targeted at particular groups of parents.

(2011, p.10)

The first stage is to identify this group of parents and then offer an invitation to talk. In order to create a plan and formulate an understanding of needs, parents must be invited into school. This first step, the invitation, is crucial as it demonstrates that parents are valued (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005). Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005, p.110) go on to claim that invitations given to parents 'serve as an important motivator'. The first step is for parents to feel that they have a part to play and their contribution is appreciated. In order to fully understand why some parents get involved in their child's education and others do not, questions have to be asked regarding what would help to improve the partnership (Hassink and Levtoy, 2016). Questions need to be asked of the parents and leaders need to be open to potential criticism and have the ability to

be reflective about our own practice. Campbell (2011) stresses the importance of communicating effectively to parents what a difference they can make to their child's education.

There is little consistency to what an effective parental partnership looks like at the present time. Clarity of what the relationship could look like is offered by Carter-Wall and Whitfield (2012, p.5) through four broad areas of intervention:

1. Improving at home parenting
2. Involving parents in school
3. Engaging parents in their child's learning
4. Aligning home school expectations

Point 4 compares with the rationale behind the partnership descriptors. Aligning expectations and sharing what success will look like are imperative. This resonates with the view of Grayson (2013, p.1), who states that effective intervention must have clarity of expected outcomes, with clearly defined 'criteria for success or failure'. Sharing expectations with parents is a challenge, particularly when this includes increasing the demands made on parents to be held to account. The mechanism of increased accountability for improving life chances for children is a significant positive step forward and will be further explored in the findings chapter.

Valuing what parents can bring to the partnership is of critical importance (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012). Parents need to believe in themselves and develop the sense of 'efficacy' (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005, p.107). For this to be nurtured it is imperative to look beyond engagement in the child's learning to feeling and being an active part in the life of the school. 'True partnership involves harnessing and utilising all the potential and strengths that parents can bring to the school' (Campbell 2011, p.6). This resonates with my view.

Controversially, more needs be done to hold parents to account for their contribution. The expectations of what parents contribute to their child's schooling and learning, in many cases, can be increased and improved in line with those of the school (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012). Macbeath (1994, p.214), states that in addition to providing opportunities for partnership working, we should 'make demands on parents'. It is interesting to note that there is little up to date literature to support Macbeath's claims. Johnson (2016), writing for *The Mail on Sunday*, suggests a more extreme approach alluding to a new 'Ofparent inspection' as part of the Ofsted framework, stating that our children are worth it. While this is a questionable source, personal experience suggests that many teachers would support Johnson's approach. For each of the stages, as discussed above, time and commitment is needed. Improving partnership with parents formed part of the school improvement agenda and as a result, was high profile and financially resourced. This level of commitment stemmed from the belief that this group of pupils had additional vulnerabilities and faced potential inequalities, if intervention did not take place before it was too late (Reay 2017).

[The parent partnership debate – concluding comments](#)

Ill-defined and unsupported statements have been identified throughout the literature search (Campbell 2011; Grayson 2013 and Ofsted 2015). There is an absence of definition and little clarity regarding measurement of partnerships. Much of the literature is reduced to opinion or at best an unsupported theory. There is knowledge and information on the subject of parental partnership and its potential impact. However, it is the lack of clarity historically, which supports the need for clearly defined terminology and a shared understanding of what constitutes effective partnership. The intention of this study is to develop a research informed theory, which will provide a precise and consistent approach. Through close partnership working with parents at Earl primary school, it is clear that parents want the best for their children. Some simply do not have the skills, without support, to achieve this. This research will demonstrate that all parents can be engaged and it is our responsibility as professionals to make this happen.

There are aspects of parental partnership that have not been explored in depth within this literature review. This includes potential influences of ethnicity and culture. Research in this field has been conducted by the DCSF (2008, p.6) who claim that 'Black and Asian parents placed an extremely high importance on the value of education'. Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005) and Grayson (2013) discuss the different relationships with schools and how schools adapt programmes to suit the needs of the different ethnic groups. This is acknowledged by Hill and Taylor (2004) who explore this concept in depth. The exploration of ethnicity and culture is of major importance, requires considerable research in its own right, and cannot be addressed in the depth it deserves in this study.

The partnership with parents whose children have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, is another area which should be researched in its own right. There is considerable literature in this field (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009; Gascoigne 2014 and Hodkinson 2015). A recent journal article has focused on the role of parents with pupils who have SEN (Bodvin, Verschueren and Elke 2018). In addition, Bodvin et al. state that literature highlights weak relationships between the school and parents of students with SEN. Trying to keep abreast of up to date research has been important. There are stories in the news at present about the role of parents in developing language for children before they start school and also with current childhood obesity figures. Parents play an enormous part in shaping life chances for their children and not all areas can be covered within this research.

My contribution to the literature field is the opportunity to measure the correlation between parental participation with the school and outcomes for children and young people. The ability to identify a need and respond appropriately. The notion that 'no family, however hard to reach is unreachable' (Grayson 2013, p.2) needs to be promoted. It is the responsibility of school leaders and teachers to find and embed the solution to reach all families. All parents, regardless of what

barriers they may face, need to understand what they can achieve and the difference that they can make for their children (Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012).

The Research Question

My professional experience as a Head Teacher working with parents to improve partnerships and time spent working within the safeguarding arena, together with my literature exploration have led to the formation of the following research question:

Should children whose parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the school and their child's learning, be classed as a vulnerable group?

Subsidiary questions will include:

- Is there a correlation between social factors and the ability for the different parental groups to work in partnership with the primary school?
- Is there a correlation between parental partnership with the primary school, as identified through the parent partnership descriptors, and measured academic progress?
- Are outcomes improved when intervention with parents takes place?
- Does the relationship between parental partnerships with school influence factors beyond the education environment, including social interactions, propensity to offend, and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies?

Chapter 4 - Methodological discussion and ethics

Methodological discussion

This chapter will discuss the methodological approach to the research. Beginning with a reminder about the focus of the research, the argument for a mixed method approach will be presented, before providing justification for this decision. The qualitative versus quantitative debate will be explored before briefly presenting the methods used. The chapter will conclude with an explanation of the ethical process and how all involved were protected from harm.

The focus of this research is to identify aspects of parental partnership that could be impacting on educational life chances for children. In exploring this concept, the intention is to promote understanding of what an effective partnership entails and the degree to which this partnership has any impact on children. Improving life chances for children is central to the philosophy of partnership working employed in Earl primary school and consequently this research. This is achieved through the inclusion of the PPDs as a measurement tool. The objective is to use a variety of methods to present a comprehensive overview, with outcomes for children remaining the centre point of all decisions made. Gorard and Taylor (2004) advocate the increased potential and possibilities offered from a mixed method approach and this is supported by Creswell (2013, p.18), who advocates a mixed approach, referring to it as a 'pragmatic worldview'.

The rationale behind my approach is to identify patterns, consistencies and contradictions (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006), which is found in qualitative and quantitative research. Bias is evident in both qualitative and quantitative research (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006), this is particularly relevant for this research, which is influenced by my desire to improve life chances for children. This research is born of my passion and experiences and cannot be separated. It has to be acknowledged that I sit at the heart of the research having had the privilege of being the headteacher at Earl primary school for the

duration of the time spent gathering data. Therefore issues related to the 'gatekeeper' role (Wellington 2015, p.31) and being in a position of authority (Silverman 2013) will be further explored in the ethics section. My role in designing and managing the Earl primary school parental partnership initiative and working intensely with families to improve collaboration, brings with it levels of subjectivity, in relation to my interpretation of these experiences (Pring 2015). Such issues must be considered, particularly with the qualitative aspects.

Qualitative methods within this research include semi-structured interviews with parents, case studies and the free text within the questionnaires sent to specialist workers within social care. The use of statistical data analysis, from two primary schools and the Local Authority, will provide direct information about the social reality (Pring 2015) faced by some of our children. Quantitative methodology includes the use of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to explore risk factors, academic progress and the need for social care intervention and specialist services. A focus of this research is to identify and understand the complexities of the needs of pupils, and their families, who are judged to be PGD.

Quantitative data analysis will provide information about the complexity of need through the use of a database, from the primary schools and one held at the Local Authority, holding facts about the child. In the case of the Local Authority, information is stored on specific case management systems (which will be explained later). My positionality and experiences cannot influence this information, there is no room for subjectivity within this aspect of the research. Data which can be scrutinised in a numerical way is reflective of quantitative research (Bryman 2012 and Creswell 2013). This data will be analysed numerically (Mcleod 2008). The PPDs bring measurement to this activity. Bryman (2012) argues that quantitative research can be defined simply with the inclusion of a measurement factor. Reflecting my responsibility to academia and the profession in terms of validity (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006), the assertion is, that the information held within the database is factual and cannot be influenced.

A large proportion of the data will be measurable and analysed through a quantitative approach, described as objective (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006). In addition, there will be some subjective qualitative data, including analysing the free response questions (Oppenheim 2000) from questionnaires to professionals, working with specialist services at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and through analysis of case studies and interviews with parents. Having argued the rationale for a mixed method approach, I find Pring (2015, p.50) to accurately query the 'rigid separation' of the two approaches. In order to present a holistic view of the potential of effective partnership with parents, I have attempted to include the observable and measurable world of a quantitative approach and the subjective world, reflective of the individual consciousness (Pring 2015).

Each method will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, however, the table below provides an overview of why methods were chosen in an attempt to answer the research question and the subsidiary questions. Five methods have been selected in order to address the research question to ensure methodological triangulation (Bryman 2012; Gorard and Taylor 2004; Wellington 2015). The use of a number of methods ensures the statistical evidence can be supported or indeed challenged by the views of parents and professionals working with families. The use of different methods will also 'enhance the internal validity' (Hartas 2010, p.278). The methods are explained in detail in table 1. The five methods are:

- Database analysis of two primary schools (n=548) using Excel to explore the key features of each of the parent groups and pupils' academic progress. An additional database analysis, using Local Authority information, is used to investigate the demand for specialist services to support young people as they move through secondary education (n=147).
- Questionnaires are utilised to assess the views of social care partners who work with families at level 4, specialist intervention (n=12).

- Case studies are employed to understand what intervention can look like and whether focused intervention makes a difference (n=2).
- Semi-structured interviews with parents explore parental views and identifies what can be learned from them (n=11).
- Documentary analysis of school reports and reading diaries – sharing the expectation with parents (n=20).

Subsidiary research question:		
Is there a correlation between social factors and the ability for the different parental groups to work in partnership with the primary school?		
Method	Focus of research	Participants
Data analysis Deprivation	Is there a correlation between the PPDs and the index of deprivation and the impact this has on children through postcode analysis. (Department for Communities and Local Government 2015)	Earl primary and Danby Lane schools
Data analysis Attendance	What are the levels of attendance for the children in the different groups?	Earl primary and Danby Lane schools
Data analysis Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Is there a correlation between the PPDs and eligibility for the pupil premium grant?	Earl primary and Danby Lane schools
Data analysis Support beyond universal services	Are pupils from PGD more likely to need the intervention of specialist services during their time in primary school?	Earl primary school only
Subsidiary research question:		
Is there a correlation between parental partnership with the primary school, as identified through the parent partnership descriptors, and measured academic progress?		
Method	Focus of research	Participants
Database analysis Academic progress	Is there a correlation between the progress of pupils and parental partnership?	Earl primary school
Subsidiary research question:		
Are outcomes improved when intervention with parents takes place?		
Method	Focus of research	Participants
Case study	What has the intervention looked like, how did parents respond and what difference has it made?	Earl primary school

The move to diminish parent group D		
Interviews with parents	What is the view of parents of the partnership and how did this inform strategic planning?	Earl primary school
Documentary analysis Home/school diaries and school reports	Do teachers respond differently to pupils from the different parental groups?	Earl primary school
Database analysis Academic progress	Is there a correlation between the progress of pupils and parental partnership?	Earl primary school
Subsidiary research question: Does the relationship between parental partnerships with school influence factors beyond the education environment, including social interactions, propensity to offend, and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies?		
Data analysis Support beyond universal services	Do children from particular parent groups place a higher demand on specialist services?	Ex Earl primary school students – Beyond Year 12
Questionnaire The need for parental partnership with specialist colleagues.	Questionnaire to 'front line' workers who complete the assessments when universal provision has not been enough.	Social Workers Family support workers Early Help team
Research question: Should children whose parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the school and the child's learning, be considered a vulnerable group?		
Data analysis The role of parents in preventing the need for repeat referrals	Is there a correlation between the PPDs and the need for repeated specialist intervention?	Ex Earl primary school students – Beyond Year 12

Table 1 - Methods used to explore the research questions

Ethics

The ethical approach to the research will be fully explored within this section. Beginning with my positionality and its potential influence, I will then clarify the stages of the ethical clearance process. Ethical issues relating to all methods will be explained before focusing on individual methods where necessary.

As previously discussed, I was head teacher at Earl primary school. Undoubtedly, this could raise questions ethically, given my closeness to the children and their parents and the potential influence that my role as an 'insider' (Wellington 2015, p.102) could have. In addition, the acknowledgment of 'power relationships' (British Education Research Association (BERA) 2018, p.13) due to the dual role of head teacher and researcher has been a constant. 'Power characteristics' (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005, p.165) could be an influence. In order to counteract this influence, it was imperative to make it clear to parents that this was a partnership of equals for the good of the child. I am confident that my role has not been influential to the research. I acknowledge that I have been responsible for the implementation of change and have been at the heart of the research. However, I have not had the responsibility of using the descriptors to categorise the partnership between parents, the child's education and the school. School staff, who work with children and their parents on a daily basis, have used the PPDs to classify the partnership.

Ethical approval has been in stages beginning in February 2016 when the initial request for approval from the ethics committee at Nottingham Trent University, was made. Approval was received on March 3rd 2016 (see appendix 1). Throughout the process BERA guidelines (2011 and 2018) were adhered to. The first contact with parents at Earl primary school was made following ethical clearance. I wrote to parents explaining the focus of the research and what I wanted to achieve (see appendix 2). Following the initial letters, in order to secure a clarity of understanding (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005), I delivered a parent workshop. The objective of this workshop was to outline what the research would entail and most importantly to further develop their

understanding of the importance of working in partnership with the school. In order to create a partnership of equals, it was imperative that parents and carers were fully informed and felt a valued part of the process. It could be argued that attendance at the workshop could influence the views of parents. As stated earlier, this was not the intention, parents simply needed to understand the rationale behind the categorisation process. In order to achieve transparency about the research (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006), I wanted parents to be involved at every stage. During this workshop, the stages of signed consent and the right to withdraw were made clear to parents. I also explained that data would be stored in an anonymous format, all names would be removed and that it was imperative that no harm was caused from participation. At all times participant's data would remain both confidential and anonymous (BERA 2018).

Some aspects of the ethics process varied dependent on the method utilised. For example, parents who volunteered to be interviewed, as names had been removed, were given their interview number in case they wished to withdraw. One database includes pupils who were on roll at Earl primary school. Parents at Earl Primary were offered the opportunity for their child to be removed from the database before any analysis began. One mother exercised this right and asked for her son to be removed from the research database. This was done immediately. The ethical process for working with Danby Lane was in stages. I presented a staff meeting to share the purpose of the research and the expectations with staff. I provided a copy of the letter sent out to Earl primary parents and this was distributed to parents at Danby Lane. The headteacher at Danby Lane primary school signed on behalf of his school in agreement to taking part in the research. The database utilised for the longitudinal study, refers to pupil achievement and categorisation, dating back to 2011 as part of previous research (Chambers 2012, u.p).

The ethical approach to working with the Local Authority was also in stages and I benefited from working with a data team, who extracted information on request. The manager of the data team signed ethical approval for me to use the

anonymised data (see appendix 3). This letter was then submitted for further ethical approval from NTU. Approval was received in November 2017 (see appendix 4). The information held within the management systems is highly sensitive. Consequently, ethics were particularly important. The database held confidential information about what had happened to young people in the real world (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005). Through the use of a data analyst, I was able to request the number of referrals rather than having to explore personal files for information. Details were not shared with me as to why intervention was needed, purely that specialist intervention had been needed. Names have been replaced with numbers within this database.

Ascertaining the views of social workers and family support partners, working on the front line with families, was a vital aspect of the research. I made the decision to do this through the use of a questionnaire. I visited the Local Authority office and wrote a letter explaining my research (appendix 5). I made myself available to reassure them of the responsibility I have in terms of ethics and validity (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006) but also in case there were any questions. It was important to explain what I hoped to gain through the use of a questionnaire and in making myself available, I hoped to gain their support (Oppenheim 2000). All returned questionnaires remained anonymised and have been given a number.

Having spent considerable time researching the correlation between parental partnership with the child's learning and the school, the most significant ethical consideration is the impact that the findings could have when published (BERA 2018). I have to consider how the findings will affect (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005) parents who may already be vulnerable, who are trying to do the right thing for their children, often in difficult circumstances. It is essential that the findings are presented in such a way that parents do not feel at fault and believe that change is possible.

In conclusion, a mixed method approach has been adopted for this research with aspects of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The PPDs have been used to explore correlations between the level of partnership and pupil outcomes. The ethical approach is transparent and has been effectively shared with all involved in the process. The next chapter explains which methods have been used to explore each of the subsidiary research questions and ultimately the main research question.

Chapter 5 – Methods

The methods were chosen to explore qualitative and quantitative information so as to answer the research question and each of the subsidiary questions. The inclusion of a number of methods (see table 1) provides a secure and well triangulated evidence base (Gorard and Taylor 2004; Bryman 2012; Wellington 2015). This chapter will be structured using each of the subsidiary research questions. Within each method, I will explain why that method was employed, the justification for the choice and the stages of implementation. This will include the approach to analysing the data, with a summary of key learning which could influence future research.

[Is there a correlation between social factors and the ability for the different parental groups to work in partnership with the primary school?](#)

Database analysis

One method is used in response to this subsidiary research question: database analysis. The purpose of this method is to create a complete picture as to the social factors affecting children and their parents and ultimately whether this impacts on their ability to work in partnership with school. Vincent (2017, p.12) advocates the need to 'develop analyses of family life with regard to parenting and parental involvement with schools'. We cannot support children and their families unless we have an understanding of potential risk factors and the impact these may have on them. These risk factors could provide barriers to parents working in partnership with the school and as such need to be highlighted. The need for interventions to be appropriately targeted at particular groups of parents is imperative (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011), it cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach. Grayson (2013, p.1) states that it must be 'explicit' as to what change is expected and 'criteria for success of failure'. This reflects my view, as ultimately, the information from the database will be used to provide focused intervention with no ambiguity of what success might be.

The facts held within the database can be investigated in a numerical way and is an indication of quantitative research (Mcleod 2008; Bryman 2012 and Creswell 2013). The fields within the database are populated with factual information about the child and form part of the annual census. The census is a statutory requirement. Consequently, the fields cannot be influenced or altered. Arguably, the inclusion of the PPDs to the databases could be described as a subjective element. Due to the levels of moderation throughout the categorisation process, I am confident that this is not the case. As referred to earlier, the PPDs have been through a moderation process and I have confidence in their accuracy. Reliability is increased due to the statutory expectation of the fields within the database. This provides consistency across schools. The use of Excel needs no debate: it has been adequate to meet the needs of the research and compatible with the systems used within the primary schools.

The database at Earl primary school and Danby Lane primary school is prepopulated with statutory information pertinent to the child. The database contains essential factual information including: gender, attendance, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those in receipt of pupil premium funding (see appendix 6). Other aspects can be added to the database. For example, the need for additional services or academic achievement. A number of the characteristics within the database formed part of this research. However, some were not included, which will be explained later.

The system of populating the database with the PPDs was a staged process. It was rigorous and carefully planned. The first stage was to hold a training session with all leaders and staff involved to ensure clarity of the PPDs and how they would be used. Sharing findings from previous research (Chambers 2012, u.p) formed part of the presentation (see appendix 7). In addition, strategies were shared regarding how parental partnership working could be developed. A vital aspect of this training session, was to give staff time to talk and debate the categories, and most importantly, what this looked like for their children and their

families. A time frame was established for teachers to add the PPDs to the database.

Earl primary school database once populated was used for a pilot analysis (based on 2016 data). The process of piloting 'to assess the appropriateness of the data collection methods' (Ary, et al. 2018, p.30) was imperative to inform the final process. The pilot began with a systematic approach; identifying themes and answering questions as they arose (Pring 2015). Remaining focussed became a priority as a multitude of potential combinations for analysis became apparent and questions leading to potential new lines of enquiry developed. Not all options were pursued, however questions and potential areas of research informed the planning. The completion date of June 2017 was given for data from all schools to be returned (see figure 8 for snapshot of database).

To protect their identity, each child has been replaced with a number. There are fields within the database that were not used, for example which term the child was born in or which class the child was in. Certain fields shown below are included in the database, but have not been part of this research, for example gender and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The fields used, were chosen as potential risk factors which, I believe, may influence the ability of parents to work in partnership with the school and will be explained in detail.

Yr	Name	Gender	SEND	PPG	PG	File	File	Attendance	IDACI Rank
5	Child 249	F			A			97.44	15267
1	Child 4	M			B			92.95	18887
2	Child 96	F		FSM	C		Con	95.51	15267
3	Child 127	M		eFSM	D	EHAF	Con	81.41	817

Figure 8 - Excerpt of the database (see appendix 6 for a full overview)

The focus of the research was to establish the correlation and any variation in the presence of social factors against each of the four parent groups. My approach to this analysis echoes the work of Burgess who states 'data analysis

is concerned with identifying patterns, implications, consistencies and inconsistencies in the data' (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006, p.87). The fields included in this aspect of the research are:

- PPG - which refers to those children who are in receipt of the pupil premium grant. Introduced in 2011 this sum of money is given to schools each year by the government to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children (Department for Education 2017).
- File – which refers to whether the children have needed support through the deployment of the early help team (EH) via the completion of an Early Help Assessment Form (EHAF). For some children, a confidential file (Con) confirms that social care involvement has been necessary.
- SEND – which refers to whether a child is on the Special Educational Needs register. The code of practice states, 'A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her' (Department for Education and Department of Health 2015, p.285).
- IDACI rank - is an index of deprivation used in the United Kingdom (Department for Communities and Local Government 2015). The numerical value is derived from postcode evidence. This results in a deprivation scale which identifies the potential impact of where the child lives, on the life of the child.

The rationale behind the approach to analysing the information contained within the database was to gain a better understanding of the complexity of needs for children within each of the parental groups, with a particular focus on those belonging to PGD. An informed decision was to analyse the reoccurring key features of PGD deemed as 'hard to reach' (Campbell 2011, p.10). The purpose was to identify the potential influential social factors, for example poverty through the IDACI, which had the potential to impact on the partnership. This research moves onto explore the statistical profile of an individual child and investigate the level of vulnerability. The ability to focus on a child from a particular parental group can lead to a creation of a child specific profile, which in turn, leads to an

informed understanding about the complexity of need faced by the child. This information can then be used to inform the assessment process to plan for improvement in relation to working in partnership with parents.

A field was chosen, for example attendance, then through analysis, any correlation between levels of attendance in relation to the four parental groups could be identified. The research question remained in focus, with the understanding that if PGD are influenced by social issues, including poverty, this could impact significantly on the ability to build a partnership with the school. Working with school may not be a priority for some families (Hill and Taylor 2004; DCFS 2008 and Smethurst 2011), indeed aspects of both social and cultural capital could restrict the ability to form positive relationships with the school (Bourdieu 1990).

The inclusion of statistical analysis for this subsidiary research question has been vital to represent the complexities for families in need. The data has provided 'objective scientific knowledge' (Burgess, Seimenski and Arthur 2006, p.54) which has been explored and presented. This objective, scientific approach (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006 and Pring 2015) was important given my dual role as headteacher and researcher. The database was prepopulated and staff working with children added the parent groups. Although, I sat at the heart of the research, this data set could not be influenced. The findings were analysed and presented.

Wellington (2015, p.266) argues that data should be presented 'as fairly, clearly and coherently' as possible. All findings are presented in bar charts with a commentary. This was a deliberate choice to provide consistency, but most importantly offers an ease of interpretation for the reader (Sapsford and Jupp 2006). The construction of bar charts through Excel, while simplistic, clearly present the information and support a statistical claim (Gorard and Taylor 2004). I was confident that this method would provide an indication about the barriers

to partnership for the different parental groups. One approach to the analysis of the data was to check for the significance of any correlation. This was assisted by the use of Pearson's correlation coefficient (PCC). This research does not explore the causal relationships. Warner (2013, p.301) states: 'correlation does not necessarily imply causation'. There is a key difference between correlation and causal relationships (Trochim 2006). This will be further developed within the findings chapter.

Is there a correlation between parental partnership with the primary school, as identified through the parent partnership descriptors, and measured academic progress?

Database analysis

The statutory database, as previously described, for Earl primary school was used for this subsidiary research question. Outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics were included. Pupil achievement has to be added to the database for the annual data collection of data by the department for education and the Local Authority. This database has been used to identify pupil progress in two different ways. The first is to calculate the average progress score achieved by pupils in each of the parent groups as measured against the parent partnership descriptors. The second is the proportion of pupils who achieve a minimum expected progress score in each of the subject areas. The initial progress data relates to cohorts of pupils attending the school in 2011 – 2012 and was part of research at Master's level (Chambers 2012, u.p). The approach to this activity was straightforward. The focus was to analyse the progress that pupils made in the three subjects with an exploration of whether there was a correlation with the parent groups (see appendix 8).

The rationale for including the historic data analysis was to provide a comparison with the 2014 – 2015. The significance of this data is that it helps to measure the impact of the intervention that occurred between 2012 and 2015 as part of the school improvement agenda. The 2016 or 2017 data was not compared with the 2011 – 2012 data due to the changes in the curriculum, following the

introduction of assessment without levels in 2016. While the main focus of this aspect was on the influence intervention may have had on PGD (those targeted for intervention), the impact on the cohort as a whole could not be ignored.

Are outcomes improved when intervention with parents takes place?

Four methods are used in response to this subsidiary question, which is in two parts. The first, is to ascertain whether there is any correlation between increased parental partnership and increased academic progress. This will be explored through a database analysis as explained above. The second explores what the intervention looked like and the potential impact on outcomes. This aspect will be explored through interviews with parents, documentary analysis and case studies.

Semi-structured interviews

In addition to the database analysis focusing on progress, semi-structured interviews were used as a vehicle to ascertain parental understanding of the partnership and their view of the role they play in supporting their children. A qualitative approach is taken to the interviews, based on human experiences (Brinkmann and Kvale 2006) and is an attempt to comprehend their point of view (Creswell and Poth 2017). It was critical for the views of parents to be heard and I had confidence that the creation of a semi-structured interview would provide the vehicle for this to take place. Interviews are a method already tested in relation to parental partnership (Crozier and Reay 2005; Berger and Lorenz 2016). Due to 'social background and personality' (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006, p.35) of the interviewer and interviewee, interviewing parents about their views on working in partnership with the school, was likely to be a challenge. The need for a common language and an awareness of the 'meaning of the language' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p.57) was imperative. Literature is limited in relation to interviewing parents about how effectively they support their child's learning. There are however, examples of interviewing parents of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) (Berger and Lorenz 2016) and this has formed part of the literature review.

Before the interview process began, it was imperative to share all aspects of the research with parents. This took place through a parent workshop session, which provided the opportunity to share the vision for the research and answer

questions. The process and purpose of the workshop is explained in the ethics section. In order to attract more parents, two workshops were held at different times. Sixty-three parents attended representing 46 families. Both parents attended for a total of 17 families. Parent from groups A, B and C were present, with representation across the year groups. A noticeable absence was representation for any parent who had met the PGD criteria. At the end of the workshop, which included a presentation (see appendix 7), volunteers were invited to participate in the interview process.

The next stage involved sharing the ethical approach, this was achieved through a letter sent to parents who had expressed an interest (see appendix 9). Clarification was made before the interview that they understood the process and indeed that they could withdraw at any time, at this point, they were asked to sign informed consent. The stages leading to the interview were planned. It was important that parents attended the interview with an informed view of the system. That being said, other parents who expressed an interest to take part were given the opportunity to do so. This improved the representation from each of the parent groups, including PGD. However, the final group of parents did not include any PGC parents as shown in table 2.

From the workshop, eight parents expressed an interest in participating in the research. One additional parent asked to be involved and two further families from PGD were invited to be interviewed. The latter two interviews formed part of the child focused case studies.

	Who attended	Parental group	Gender and age of child/children
Parent 1	Mum	Group B	Boy – Early Years (EYFS)
Parent 2	Mum	Group B	Boy – EYFS
Parent 3	Mum	Group A	Girl - Year 3
Parent 4	Mum	Group B	Girl – Year 1
Parent 5	Mum	Group B	Boy – Year 1 and Year 4
Parent 6	Mum	Group B	Boy – EYFS
Parent 7	Dad	Group B	Boy – Year 6
Parent 8	Dad	Group A	Girl – Year 1

Parent 9	Mum (Did not attend workshop)	Group B	Girl – Year 3
Parent 10 (Case study 1)	Dad	Group D	Boys – EYFS, Y2 and Y3
Parent 11 (Case study 2)	Mum and Dad	Group D	Girls – Year 4 & Year 6

Table 2 - Attendance summary for the interviews

The decision to interview parents in only one of the schools was an informed one. In addition to the workshop, parents at Earl primary school had been aware of the expectations for some time. They recognised that their involvement in their child’s learning was monitored through the ‘school readiness’ box at the end of their child’s school report (see appendix 10). However, to interview parents who have received training, could be criticised as potentially influencing their views. Parents had to have an understanding of the descriptors in order to share their informed views.

After working with parents and securing their participation, the next stage of the process was to create the questions and run a pilot interview. Part of this preparation included discussing the rationale and questions for the interviews with professional doctoral students in my university cohort. The cohort represents a broad scope of professionals whose educational knowledge varied considerably. I valued their feedback. Working with multi-professionals in this way was positive in developing my role as a professional researcher (Fulton, et al. 2013). Running pilot interviews was a positive step. Following the advice of Seidman (2013, p.42) to include a ‘pilot venture’ led to redrafting the interview questions. The first alteration was to simply include the age and gender of the child (see appendix 11).

It was important that the interviews had both structure and the opportunity for parents to simply talk. The strengths of a structured interview are highlighted by Wellington (2015) and supported by Bryman (2012), who claims that a standardised format limits the potential for mistakes. While I wanted to be able

to easily analyse the data gathered through interviews, this was not the driving force behind the decision to choose the format. Gathering the points of view (Bryman 2012) of parents was imperative and therefore open ended questions were also a necessity.

Interviewing parents, who I knew well, was a challenge, however, the interaction between us was positive (Harris and Goodall 2007). Throughout the interviews, an awareness of my positionality and the potential 'power relationships' (BERA 2018, p.13) remained constant. I kept my responses and acknowledgement of their comments to a minimum to avoid any suggestion of leading or influencing the responses of the interviewees. A third party could have conducted the interview on my behalf, however, I believed increased consistency would be achieved if I conducted the interviews myself. Part of the rationale for the interviews was that the replies could be grouped for comparison. My approach resonates with the views of Bryman (2012, p.210) who states that 'this can be achieved reliably only if those replies are in response to identical cues'. The decision to conduct the interviews myself, was beneficial. The interviews were friendly and transparent. Ultimately, I was able to confidently explore the views of parents. The positive approach enabled me to seamlessly probe and allow the interviewee to talk freely. Bryman claims:

Rambling or going off on tangents is often encouraged, it gives insight into what the interviewee sees relevant and important.

(2012, p.470)

Bryman's view echoes the approach taken during this research. I found many parents became more relaxed the more they spoke of events that were important to them. A positive setting was created and provided a secure vehicle to have an accurate understanding of the experience of the interviewees and most importantly 'the meaning they make of that experience' (Seidman 2013, p.9). The dialogue between the parent and myself as an interviewer was seamless. I

was able to be an active part of the interview without being too intrusive (Kvale 2006).

The planning of the interviews included consideration of the time parents would be able to give. The choice of only eight questions was to reflect the time given, but also be well-focused on the research questions (see appendix 11). Seidman (2013, p.86) advocates focus when interviewing, 'listen more, talk less and ask real questions'. The questions were simple, although it did become apparent that additional explanation was necessary for some parents. Kvale (2008) suggests nine types of interview questions. Bryman (2012) states that almost all of these question types will be used, this was not the case for my interview. Most of the questions either probing "can you tell me more about that?" or direct, for example, where do you grade yourself?

For ease of recording, a 'voice recorder' was used and each interview was saved under a code; parent 1 through to parent 11. Parents were told which number they were in case they wished to withdraw at any stage and a signed record stored. It was important that a true reflection of the interview was captured and the flow of the interview remained uninterrupted. Seidman (2013, p.117) advocates the use of recording an 'in depth' interview. Directly after the interview, the recording was transcribed word for word (Seidman 2013, p.151), (see appendix 12a - 12i). Individual word documents were created for each interviewee. In addition, each of the responses to the questions were copied across into an Excel database (see appendix 13). This document provided the opportunity to explore both previously identified themes and emerging themes.

A thematic approach of analysis was adopted in order to work through the transcripts from the ten interviews. This included priori themes and emergent themes. Kvale (2008, p.103) argues that there are no 'magical tools' to support the analysis of interviews, I do however, think that a systematic and structured method is essential. The adopted thematic approach to analysis, has allowed

themes to be focussed, structured and easy to explore: leading to a well organised data set (Braun and Clarke 2006). Patterns could then be scrutinised. As stated earlier, in addition to the analysis within the word documents, answers were copied across to a database which had been pre-populated with the listed themes, the process of coding, the attaching of a label to a word, group of words or a sentence (Silverman 2013 and Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2013) was well-planned for.

Literature informed the pre-planned themes identified as relevant to the key aspects of the research question. The themes included:

- parental relationship with the teacher;
- time and/or capacity of parents;
- the age of child;
- role of the school;
- understanding of the grading system and the targeting of PGD;
- how parents saw their ability to support the child.

Emerging themes quickly became apparent. Due to my position as an 'insider' researcher (Merriam and Tisdell 2015, p.161), taking an interpretivist approach (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthu 2006), it was particularly important to consider the process of categorising the emerging themes with an awareness of potential bias. This aspect of the research was subjective (Pring 2015) and had to be managed carefully. I began with themes which emerging themes that I had not expected. Of particular interest was the negative self-perception from parents and how they viewed their own ability to support their children. Hill and Taylor (2004, p.162) claim that 'self-perception' and 'negative feelings' present a barrier to parents working in partnership with the school, this was apparent during my discussions with parents. Additional emerging themes were also documented and included:

- attitudes towards the grading system;
- stereotyping of parents (from parents);
- attitudes of the child towards parents supporting them.

Documentary evidence

The use of documentary evidence at Earl primary school added a significant contribution to the data gathered through the interviews, in that it returns the focus of the research to individual children. Effective communication between the home and school is key in further developing partnerships. Carter-Wall and Whitfield (2012, p.6) support the need for 'maintaining a two-way exchange of information'. At Earl primary school, the home/school diary is used to support this. An analysis of the home/school diary provides the opportunity to explore parental levels of commitment to learning (providing that this is documented). It was also an opportunity to explore whether the teacher displays different expectations depending on the parent group. Twenty children were chosen for this activity (see table 3). It was necessary to include the children who were part of the case study families in this aspect of the research. During the early research process, other children from the same class were included to create a control group, so that the variables were minimised (Tuckman and Harper 2012).

Year Group	Parent Group	Child
EYFS	A	Boy
EYFS	B	Boy
EYFS	C	Case study boy
EYFS	D	Boy (Book not in school for analysis)
Year 2	A	Boy
Year 2	B	Case study boy
Year 2	C	Boy
Year 2	D	There are no PGD boys in this year group
Year 3	A	Boy
Year 3	B	Case study boy
Year 3	C	Boy
Year 3	D	Boy – Reading diary not in school
Year 4	A	Girl
Year 4	B	Girl
Year 4	C	Case study girl
Year 4	D	There are no PGD girls in this year group
Year 6	A	Girl
Year 6	B	Case study girl
Year 6	C	Girl
Year 6	D	There are no PGD girls in this year group

Table 3 - Selected pupils for documentary evidence analysis

However, for this research the documentary evidence has been used purely for the triangulation of evidence within the case studies and the findings of this method will not be explored independently.

In addition to the home/school diary, the end of year school reports were analysed. This summary of the child's achievements includes targets for the next year and reflects the child's readiness for learning on a daily basis (see appendix 10). In addition, the initial meeting with new teachers provides the opportunity to share the expectations of 'school readiness' with parents. They form part of the non-negotiables (see appendix 14). The approach for the school report was straight forward: what does the summary of the report look like for children and are teachers accurately holding parents to account through the school readiness checklist? It is not an easy task for teachers to be honest and direct about the involvement of parents, as they are aware that this will be discussed during a parents' evening meeting.

Case studies

The case studies focused on families who have worked in partnership, at Earl primary school, to improve the support they give to the school and their child's learning. These families were initially judged to fit the PGD criteria. The motivation for using case studies was to assess whether work with parents has led to progress or has indeed produced a particular outcome (Yin 2009, p.16), which is referred to as a 'causal relationship'. The case study families were identified following successful intervention, which led to a move through the PPDs. It could be argued that the research in its entirety is a case study, and in some ways it is. The need to focus on the child is presented in figure 9.

The study of how an initiative, a school improvement priority, influenced life chances for children. At a micro level there is also the case study of an individual

child and his/her family. Yin (2013) advocates the use of a case study to contribute to knowledge of individual phenomena. The individual case studies go some way to present the impact of the research at an individual level. The process for targeted families spanned an eighteen-month period of time and followed a planned intervention programme.

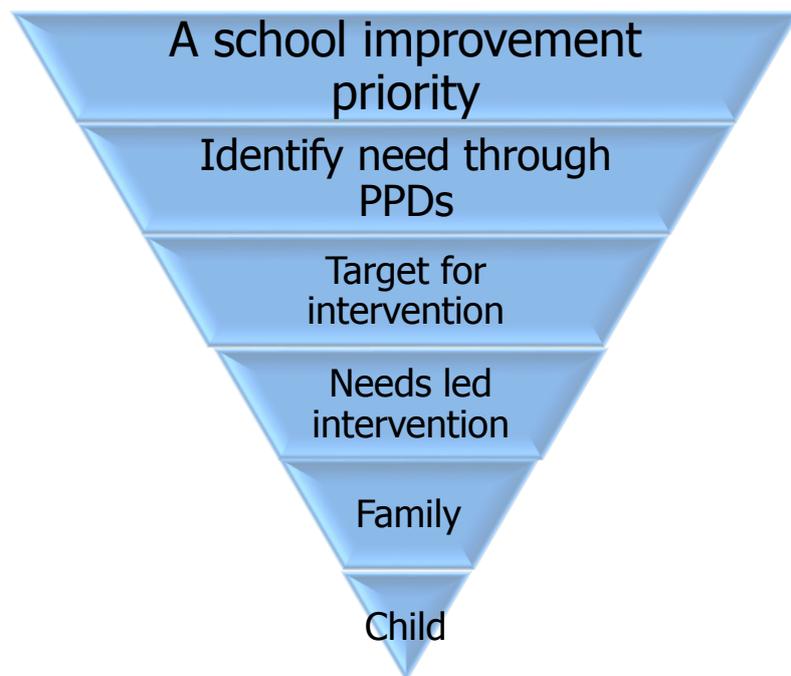


Figure 9 - The need to focus on the individual child

Before explaining the methods included within the case studies, it is important to understand what the process of intervention looked like.

Stage one Class teachers highlighted concerns about the parents' lack of engagement in the child's learning and graded them as PGD.

Stage two Information held about the child and family were considered before the meeting. The interventions were informed by a clear needs analysis (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011) of the individual family and positive discrimination being sensitive to the needs of the family (Campbell 2011) where necessary.

Stage three Parents were contacted and invited in for a meeting with the headteacher to discuss how, in partnership, improvements can be made. Chynoweth (2016, p.40) supports this approach advocating sitting around a table for a 'proper chat'. The agenda for the meeting included the sharing of research findings (Chambers 2012, u.p) and the invitation for parents to raise any concerns or issues so that they could be resolved or supported. The meeting resulted in targets being set for school leaders to support the partnership and targets for the parents to support the child's learning.

Stage four A date was set for the intervention to be reviewed half-termly and progress was closely monitored.

Stage five Intervention for each family varied depending on the individual needs.

Stage six The intervention plan or in some cases support plan was reviewed and any impact identified.

Three families were identified as possible case studies. One family was approached due to the level of support already taking place and two volunteered. One of the volunteer families asked to withdraw shortly after agreeing to be involved. The decision to use more than one case study was a deliberate one. It is important to represent contrasting situations if possible (Yin 2009). One of the case studies is a family of girls, one is a family of boys. Parents involved in the case study also differ: case study 1 involves dad (parents were separated) and case study 2 includes both parents. The case studies utilised three research methods in order to provide a secure evidence base. The case studies explore how the evidence from the interviews (see appendix 15) is supported by documentary evidence, for example, school readiness at the end of the child's report and the progress made by pupils. In addition, the wider engagement of pupils in the life of the school was explored.

Stage six involved an exploration of influence, exploring the impact of intervention. Part of this process was to identify aspects which the school had improved but also recognising changes originating as family issues. Where the school had been set targets, questions were asked about how this had been met and what the impact had been. When a family, or individual children had needed support the success of intervention was evaluated. Trying to change the habitus, 'a spontaneity without consciousness or will' (Bourdieu 1990, p.56) and the mind-set of parents was a challenge. As stated earlier, some of this success was not measurable, for example, parents and children simply feeling more optimistic about school and taking part in extra-curricular activities. Positive memories and experiences feed the self-esteem and could potentially raise educational aspirations (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012) of some of our most vulnerable children, and indeed their families. These magical moments deserve recognition as does the statistical evidence (Yin 2009) as it is an important aspect of parental partnership and development of the child. This can be as simple as an award in assembly, but must be recognised.

Does the relationship between parental partnerships with school influence factors beyond the education environment, including social interactions, propensity to offend, and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies?

Two methods are used in response to this subsidiary question. This aspect was explored through a database analysis, working in partnership with data analysts at the Local Authority and through questionnaires to professionals who work with families at the point of an assessment for specialist services.

Database analysis

Data analysts from the Local Authority were able to provide details of pathways in an anonymous format. This information was then mobilised to explore the relationship between parental partnership with the school and the need for support from specialist services. I entered the anonymous data onto an Excel spreadsheet. The fields included; the cohort, parental group, the specialist service to which a referral was made and the number of referrals. A colour coded system was used to support the data analysis.

The data team at the Local Authority were able to provide pertinent information for three different cohorts of children who had moved through secondary education, after leaving Earl primary school (EPS). Cohorts are referred to, in chronological order as:

- C1 – the first cohort to leave EPS with 54 children
- C2 – the second cohort to leave EPS with 47 children
- C3 – the third cohort to leave EPS with 46 children.

Three different management programmes were used to source the information. Pseudonyms have been used for the management systems (see table 4).

System	Brief description	Referrals included
Youth system	Youth offending case management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth offending preventative services - Pre-court intervention - Court appearances
Family assessment system	Management system for children and young people who need social care intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial family assessment - Domestic violence - Child at risk of significant harm - Child in need plans - Child protection plans
Education system	Education support management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children missing education - Exclusions from school - Education, health and care plans

Table 4 - Local Authority management systems

As discussed, the partnership with parents had been categorised when pupils were attending Earl primary school and the parent groups were added to the school database at that time. The database was used, at that time, to ascertain a correlation between the level of partnership and the progress and attainment of pupils (Chambers 2012, u.p). As with the previous database analysis methods, the data has been prepopulated and the parent groups allocated by staff working with pupils. Consequently, an objective approach (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006) has been adopted. The descriptors have been modified since 2012, with additional clarification added (see figures 3-6) however, I am confident that the information clearly reflects the level of parental partnership during the primary school years.

The first stage of the post primary school analysis was to explore whether pupils had needed specialist intervention since leaving Earl primary school. Intervention

during their time at primary school has not been included, in order to provide a focused time frame for the analysis. Table 5 is a snapshot of the initial database.

Name	Gen	SEND	PG		Youth system 2016	Family assessment system 2016	Education system 2016	General
C1 child 42	M		A		Not	Not	None	No
C1 child 5	M		B		Not	Not	Yes	Yes
C1 child 30	M	SEN	C		Not	Not	Yes	Yes
C1 child 37	M		D		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 5 - Pilot analysis

This information was used for the pilot analysis in July 2016. The pilot (Bryman 2012) presented a vital opportunity to explore whether the database provided a clarity as to the level of need. Initially, this simply included assessing the demand for services. The test was successful in identifying the level of service requested. However, the impact and whether further intervention was required could not be quantified. The pilot resulted in the database being colour coded with red, amber and green (RAG rated). More information was needed in order to understand the level of need and whether specialist workers had worked effectively with parents, overcoming 'underlying inequalities' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p.71) to improve life chances for children. It was not part of the original plan to RAG rate the referrals, but it proved to be invaluable. The RAG rating provided an indication of the success of intervention for each of the parent groups. This additional information also provided the opportunity for an analysis to take place of what was happening over time.

Name	Gen	SEND	PG		Youth system 2016	Youth system 2017	Education system 2017	General
C1 child 42	M		A		Not	Not	None	No
C1 child 5	M		B		Not	Not	2-3 involvements	Yes
C1 child 30	M	SEN	C		Not	Not	2-3 involvements	Yes
1 child 37	M		D		Numerous involvements	2 – 3 involvements	numerous involvements	Yes

Table 6 - Database snapshot

The RAG rating process led to the use of three colours red, amber and green. In the cases of no referral to specialist services, the cell remained white with the word not/none. When intervention had taken place, three colours were used to reflect the three levels of demand.

- Green reflects a single referral to a service.
- Amber reflects two or three occasions where referrals have been necessary
- Red reflects referrals on four or more occasions.

The focus of this analysis was purely to assess the level of need, as expressed through the number of agency referrals. The findings will be presented through the use of bar charts. This will support interpretation and avoid ambiguity which is essential (Sapsford and Jupp 2006). I am confident that this method will provide a clear indication about the demand on services from some of our most vulnerable young people.

Questionnaire

In order to triangulate the findings from the database analysis with the views of colleagues working within the specialist services, I created a questionnaire. The questionnaire was a straightforward way of assessing the views of specialist practitioners. I was keen to explore their views as to whether partnership working was important when families were in need of help. The research question remained at the forefront of the questionnaire design together with a consideration of how the questionnaire would be analysed (Wellington 2015). When devising the questionnaire, I did not initially consider the types of questions that would be included. Bryman (2012) argues that there are different types of questions which serve a purpose in a questionnaire. Oppenheim (2000, p.195) refers to the Likert scale as a 'popular scaling procedure'. Bryman (2012) argues that the Likert scale is regularly used for this purpose. I have used the Likert scale as the measurement of attitude, it has been straightforward and has been an important aspect of this analysis. I chose to have a five point scale, aware

that participants could select the middle ground, acknowledging that 'sitting in the middle' could be reflective of their view. Apart from factual questions which include role and experience, I have not included any closed questions. All questions use the Likert scale, or are open ended.

The creation of the questionnaire took time. It was imperative to cover the key areas in a short design, ensuring 'brevity and clarity' (Wellington 2015, p.163), while supporting colleagues to complete it in a timely fashion through a clarity of what was expected. Questions were simplistic as demonstrated in the figure below.

How confident are you in working with parents to support the needs of children within this role?	1 = Not confident 5 = Very confident
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Figure 10 - Snapshot of the questionnaire (see appendix 16 for full questionnaire)

The structure of the questionnaire was important. Hartas (2010, p.267) suggests avoiding controversial questions at the beginning of a questionnaire and goes on to advise researchers to create a flow from 'general to specific themes'. I included a controversial question, based on cause and effect. This led to considerable free text being included in the responses and will be explored in the findings section.

After designing the questionnaire, it was important to run a pilot. There are lessons to be learned from a pilot questionnaire (Oppenheim 2000 and Hartas 2010. Wellington (2015, p.196) supports this suggesting that a pilot is a 'key stage in design and construction'. A retired police officer and a retired social worker supported this activity (see appendix 17 for commentary on the changes). Both colleagues provided valuable advice on how this could be improved. Consequently, the amended final questionnaire was produced (see appendix 16).

The questionnaire was sent out to partners who work within the specialist services. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was chosen as the starting point for the questionnaire. The MASH is a group of multi-agency professionals who work together to share information and plan for support at level 4 intervention.

It was not easy to engage a swift response from the MASH professionals. My initial contact, via email, explained the ethics behind the research and a brief explanation of its purpose. As a follow up to the email, I visited the team room. The purpose of this visit was to talk to colleagues and answer pertinent questions. Questionnaires do not provide opportunities for discussion or for participants to clarify their understanding of a question (Wellington 2015) and it was important that this was available. In addition, the visit was also an attempt to gain their cooperation (Oppenheim 2000). I offered to stay on site for a while to collect the questionnaires. After this visit, two had been completed. In response to the poor completion rate, I personally distributed additional printed questionnaires with attached letter (see appendix 16) and left an envelope in which they could be collated. A total of 30 questionnaires were distributed and it was disappointing that only three were returned.

To improve returns, I contacted the social care department for more questionnaires to be circulated to social workers who worked on the front line, completing assessments for social care intervention (the assessment team). A senior team member sent the questionnaire out on my behalf. He explained that the 'research could be helpful to us and the children and families we work with' (see appendix 18). As a result, I had 12 completed questionnaires to analyse. I made the decision not to use a postal questionnaire due to the potential, well documented, 'low response' (Bryman 2012, p.237). I was disappointed that I only received 12 completed questionnaires and that there was no representation of the views of the police or health colleagues from the MASH.

An Excel database was used to collate the responses to the questionnaire (see appendix 19). Due to the use of the Likert scale (Oppenheim 2000), the majority of the questions were analysed using a quantitative approach (Joshi, et al. 2015). Wellington (2015, p.58) refers to the questionnaire as 'interviewing by numbers'. The administration of this analysis was considerably straightforward. However, as Wellington (2015) suggests, questionnaires can also provide qualitative data through the open ended questions. I had not anticipated the amount of free text that would be presented within the questionnaire. Never the less, qualitative analysis has been relevant in this research and analysing the open ended questions was a challenge. These responses have been analysed in isolation and comments have been added to the database. This subjective approach could be challenged, due to potential bias (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006), particularly as I had not created a thematic plan for analysing the responses. I simply read through them and documented key themes for discussion. These comments will be further explored in the findings section.

Should children whose parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the primary school and their child's learning, be classed as a vulnerable group?

This predominant research question will inevitably reflect all methods used thus far. However, the principle method will be database analysis, working as previously, with the data analysts at the Local Authority. The purpose of this method was to explore the regularity of need for specialist services and whether the need for repeat referrals was reflected in PGA through to PGD. This was explored through the RAG rating system. The correlation between parental partnership with the school and the cumulative demand for specialist support will be explored in chapter 6. The approach will mirror that used previously as explained using the management systems, (see table 4).

Concluding comments

The methods used have provided a plethora of data to analyse and ultimately answer the research question. There are however, aspects which could have been improved. On reflection, interviews with social workers, rather than a questionnaire, would have provided a clearer picture and avoided ambiguity (Wellington 2015). I would have benefited from the opportunity to further explore some of the answers provided. I had planned initially to interview pupils and observe a parents evening. Both of these however, were ruled out on the grounds of the potential impact of 'power relationships' (BERA 2018, p.13).

Chapter 6 – Findings and discussion

The findings section will be structured using the subsidiary research questions:

- Is there a correlation between social factors and the ability for the different parental groups to work in partnership with the primary school?
- Is there a correlation between parental partnership with the primary school, as identified through the Parent Partnership Descriptors, and measured academic progress?
- Are outcomes improved when intervention with parents takes place?
- Does the relationship between parental partnerships with school influence factors beyond the education environment, including social interactions, propensity to offend, and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies?

These subsidiary questions help to answer the predominant research question:

- Should children whose parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the school and their child's learning, be classed as a vulnerable group?

Throughout the findings chapter, all charts are presented as bar charts and follow the same format. The parent groups are colour coded and a key is presented. The findings within the charts are based on five different data captures from databases. The numbers represented within each of the activities are explained (see tables 7 – 11). As previously outlined, two schools provide data for some aspects of this research. This was a deliberate decision in order to amalgamate the children and have a cross section across the two schools. The schools are Earl primary school, which has been part of this research since 2010 and Danby Lane primary school. A statistic common to activities involving both schools, is the number of parents represented in each parent group. These numbers are shown in the table below. The combined pupil population for both schools is 548 children as of June 2017.

Parent Group	Earl Primary	Danby Lane primary	Combined number of pupils	% of pupil population (both schools)
A	38	8	46	8%
B	196	171	367	67%
C	58	53	111	20
D	6	18	24	4%
Totals	298	250	548	99%

Table 7 - Combined pupil population of the two schools

Some activities rely on data provided only from the pupils who were on roll at Earl primary school when the data was captured in June 2017 and does not include Danby Lane.

Parent Group	Number	% of pupil population
A	38	13%
B	196	66%
C	58	19%
D	6	2%
Totals	298	100%

Table 8 - Pupils at Earl primary school 2017

The longitudinal study includes pupils who historically attended Earl primary school. This in itself is split into two different groups. The first table (table 9) reflects the number of pupils from data captured 2011 – 2012 when the majority of these pupils were still at Earl primary school. It must be noted that only pupils from Year 1 – Year 5 were included in the data collection. This is because, at the time the Year 6 teachers felt that they could not commit to the research due to the pressures of the national standard assessment tasks (SATs). As a result, the dataset of 2014 – 2015 used for comparative purposes with the 2011 – 2012 cohort, refers to pupils in Year 1 – Year 5 only.

Parent Group	Number	% of pupil population
A	25	12%
B	104	50%
C	65	31%
D	14	7%
Totals	208	100%

Table 9 - Data capture 2011- 2012 at Earl primary school

Parent Group	Number	% of pupil population
A	21	9%
B	144	60%
C	68	28%
D	6	2%
Totals	239	99%

Table 10 - Data capture 2014 - 2015 at Earl primary school

The final table reflects the number of pupils who historically attended Earl primary school. The pupils had moved from primary school through to secondary school. The data, provided by the Local Authority, was captured in June 2017. This data is only referred to when asking the final subsidiary research question, which explores the relationship between parental partnership and factors beyond the education environment. This includes, social interactions, propensity to offend and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies. There are three year groups (cohorts) of pupils in this group. Table 11 shows the combined number of pupils involved.

Parent Group	Number	% of pupil population
A	22	15%
B	55	37%
C	48	33%
D	22	15%
Totals	147	100%

Table 11 - Three cohorts who have moved through secondary school, information captured June 2017

Pearson's correlation coefficient (Benesty, et al. 2009) is referred to throughout this section to evidence the strength of the relationship between the two variables, for example school attendance and parent group. The strength of the relationship is expressed as a value between 0 and 1. A value in excess of 0.9 is usually associated with a high correlation (Warner 2013).

Is there a correlation between social factors and the ability for the different parental groups to work in partnership with the primary school?

In this section a number of social factors will be explored:

- Levels of deprivation
- Pupil attendance
- Referrals to specialist services

Deprivation

For the purpose of this activity, I have identified levels of deprivation through two measures. The first is the IDACI (the income deprivation affecting children index). This provides a ranked score with the highest levels of deprivation being identified as scoring less than 9854 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2015). The second measure is pupils who were in receipt of the pupil premium grant (PPG) when the data was captured in June 2017. With reference to the IDACI system, chart 1 examines those children whose household, determined by postcode, falls within the most deprived category across the two primary schools.

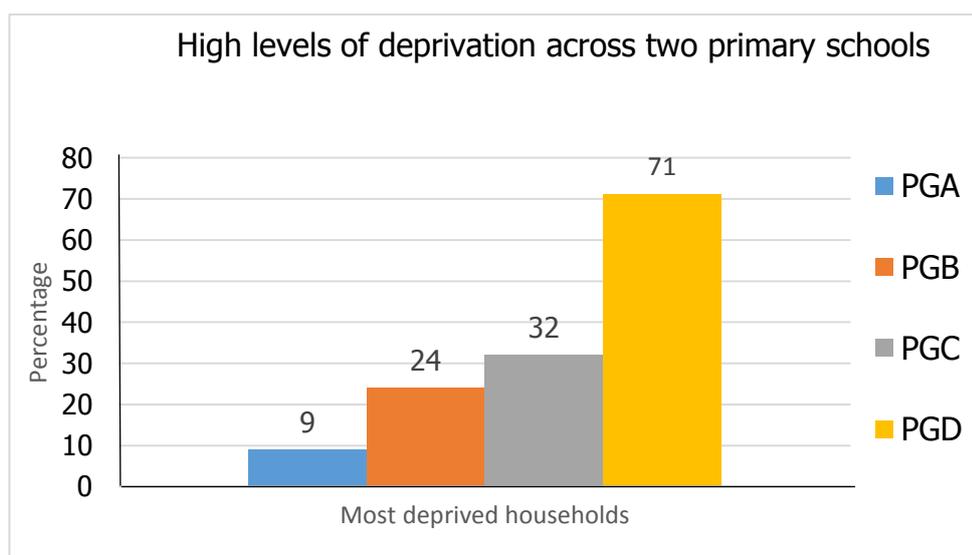


Chart 1 - Deprivation thresholds by parent group

A total of 144 children met the most deprived criteria with an IDACI ranking less than or equal to 9,854. The data in chart 1 shows an ascending relationship between those most deprived and the four parental groups. Nine percent (n=4) of PGA households fell within the most deprived threshold criteria. This is in stark contrast to parent group D where 71% (n=17) of households are ranked within the most deprived band. The evidence from chart 1 argues for a PCC of 0.94 between parent groups and deprivation.

Pupil Premium

An additional measure of deprivation is identifying those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant (PPG), and are from low income families. In this respect, the statistics for each parent group show a similar, but not identical, trend to those presented in Chart 1.

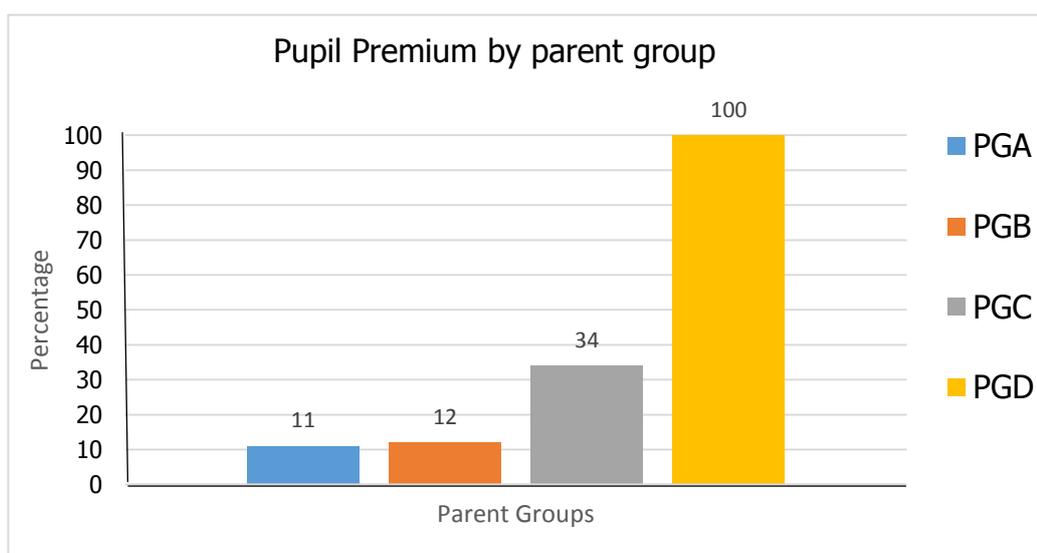


Chart 2 - Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant (PPG) by parent group

The evidence shows an ascending relationship between pupil premium and the four parent groups. Children from PGA are shown at 11% (n=5), the highest association is recorded against PGD at 100% (n= 24). The evidence from chart 2 argues for a PCC of 0.89 between parent groups and being in receipt of the pupil premium grant.

Drawing on the data from Chart 1 and Chart 2, a correlation between deprivation and parental participation with the child's learning is evident, however, a causal relationship (Trochim 2006) is not proved. To what degree deprivation affects parental attitude to collaborative working is subject to conjecture and requires further research in its own right. What is taken from the findings are that families assessed as PGD are proportionately more likely to experience deprivation and in be in receipt of pupil premium. The experience of deprivation, which could be reflective of social class (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), may in itself present a barrier to working in partnership. This barrier has to be addressed from both perspectives, parents and school leaders. The challenge to schools is that parents whose children would benefit most from support are the hardest to engage (Hill and Taylor 2004).

The theme of engaging families where support is most needed continues as pupil attendance is explored. As previously described, the study group consist of 548 children across two primary schools. Pupils were categorised into three groups. The groups were chosen as they represent national approaches to attendance expectations. The first is national average, against which schools are measured. The second is the measure for poor attendance, which schools should be addressing. The groups are:

1. Pupils whose attendance reaches the national expectation of 96%.
2. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% and therefore classed as persistent absentees.
3. Pupils who fall into neither of the above categories.

The largest single group were the 67% (n=365) who met the national attendance average of 96% or above. The average attendance of 33 children (6%) measured 90% or below and therefore met the persistent absentee criteria. The remaining 27% of children (n=150) fell into neither category and are not shown in chart 3.

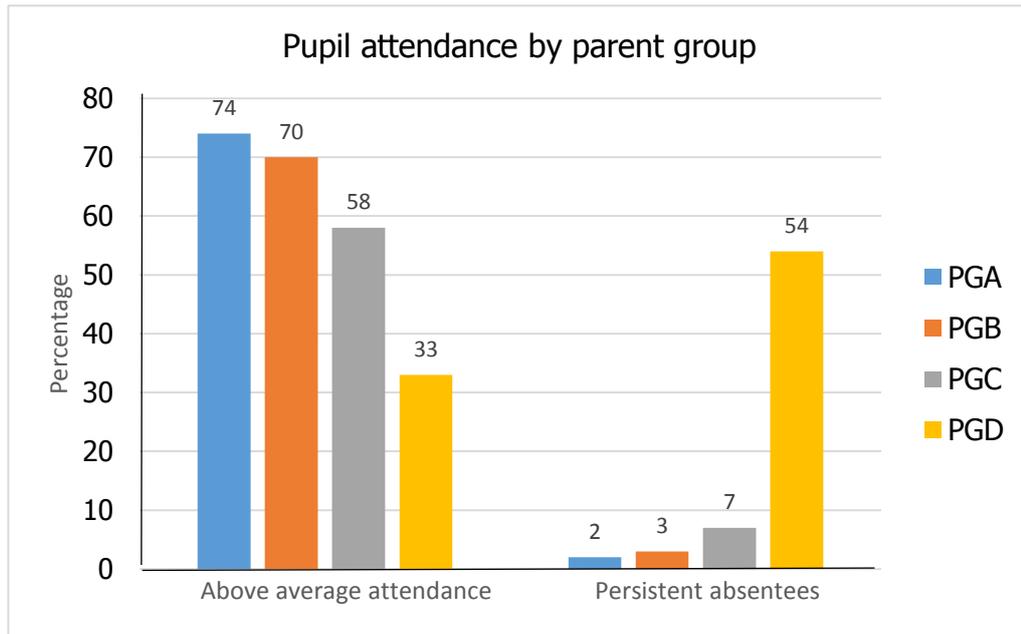


Chart 3 - Pupil attendance by parent group - June 2017

The columns to the left depict those children, within each parent group, who have achieved or exceeded the national average attendance score of 96%. The right-hand side columns show the percentage number of children, from each parent group, whose attendance is recorded at 90% or below and are therefore considered to be persistent absentees.

The four columns in respect of children achieving above the national attendance average are displayed in descending order. The statistics for parent groups A and B are similar returning 74% (n=34) and 70% (n=259) respectively. Children from families, assessed as PGC, are calculated at 58%. The parents of 24 children were assessed as meeting the PGD criteria. Of this number 33% (n=8) pupils achieved above average attendance. Consequently, 66% (n=16) failed to meet the national average attendance target. The evidence from chart 3 argues for a PCC of 0.94 between parent groups and those achieve above the average expected attendance rates.

Parent group A consists of 46 children. One child (2%) recorded below the 90% criteria (achieving an attendance score of 80%) and was therefore recorded as a

persistent absentee. The 367 children from PGB returned a slightly higher outcome, in percentage terms, with 3% (n=11) falling below 90% attendance. Persistent absenteeism increases with the 111 children whose parents are assessed a PGC with 7% (n=8). Children from parents assessed as parent group D form the lowest group within the study accounting for 24 or 4% of the total pupil population but account for 39% (n=13) of those children meeting the persistent absentee criteria. In over half of the 13 (54%) cases of children whose parents are assessed as PGD the child is judged to be a persistent absentee. The average attendance for PGD was recorded as 89%. Eight children failed to achieve attendance scores of 85% or above with three children falling below 80%. These statistics are unique to PGD.

The school academic year consists of 190 days (or 380 sessions) (DfE 2018). If the average attendance data for PGD of 89% is applied to a school year, 21 days are lost. If the attendance figures continue during their seven years at primary school, then 147 days schooling are lost. On average children from parent group D would miss over 29 weeks of primary education over time, if left unchecked. The evidence from Chart 3 clearly suggests a correlation between poor attendance and a lack of parent partnership with the child's education. Of concern is the amount of education that can be lost. The view of Campbell (2010) who states that parents who do not engage with school are less likely to ensure that their children attend regularly resonates with these findings. The impact: it is difficult to support pupils if they do not attend school. This provides a further barrier to supporting the children who need it most (Hill and Taylor 2004) due to additional risk factors which are still to be explored.

One such risk factor is the need for early help intervention. This support is offered to families 'in need' through the early help team. School leaders work with families to identify needs and a referral is completed. Examples of early help include behaviour management and support for domestic violence. At times, this early help prevents referrals to social care, providing the intervention at the earliest opportunity. Referrals to early help can also be as a result of stepping

down from social care intervention. Early help intervention has been a vital aspect of this research and has been an action following some meetings with PGD parents.

The data shown in chart 4 refers to children attending Earl primary school only, this is because early intervention is not logged onto Danby Lane primary school database. This equates to 298 pupils being included in the study.

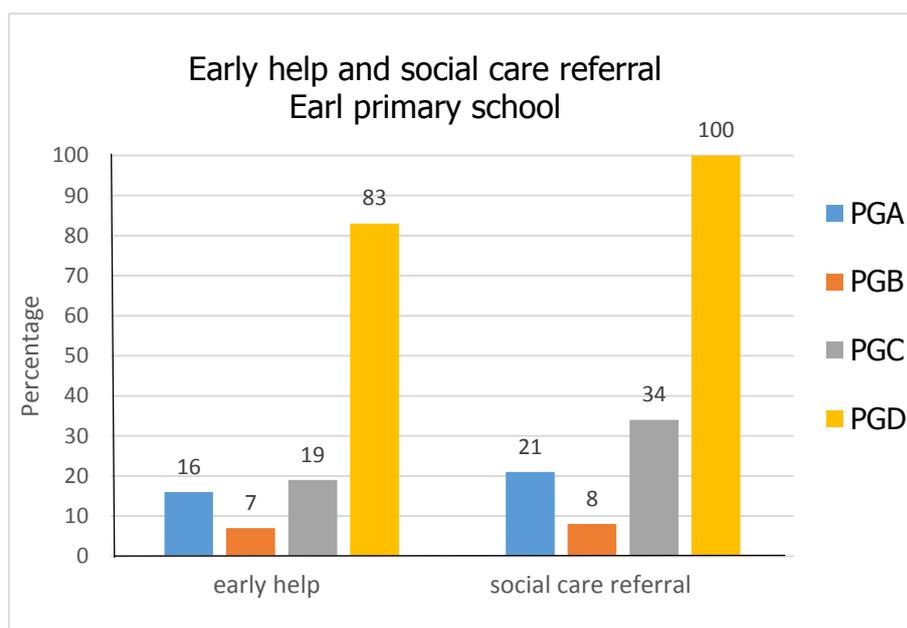


Chart 4 - Early help and social care referrals - June 2017

The data comprises children needing early help intervention owing to family difficulties or who have required a referral to the social care department. The data is presented in two sets of four columns showing the percentage of children who met the criteria.

Thirty-six children (12%) were in receipt of early help with 49 (16%) of the school population having a social care file. Twenty children, 7% of the school population (data not shown in chart 4) were recorded as being in need of early help (EH) and social care (SC) combined. The profiles of both charts are similar both returning a PCC in the region of 0.8, indicating a positive association between parental groups and the two sets of data.

Parent Group A at Earl primary school produced a referral rate 16% (n=6) to EH and a rate of 21% to (n=8) to SC. The lowest percentage of referrals was attained by PGB at 7% (n=14) EH and 8% (n=15) SC. The requests for EH intervention from PGC was 19% (n=11) EH and 34% (n=20) SC. The statistics for PGD show an extensive need for EH (83%) and social care (100%). Any discussion and analysis on request for EH and SC in respect of PGD has to take into consideration the low numbers involved. By 2017 the children whose parents were assessed as PGD, due to effective intervention, had fallen to 2% (n=6) of the school population.

Table 12 provides an overview of the six children whose parents are categorised as PGD, it is clear to see that individual children have a complexity of need. There are six potential risk factors included in the school database, which have been identified by the school leaders. Progress for pupils with any of these factors are closely monitored, due to the potential impact that just one risk factor could have on outcomes for children. All children meet the criteria of at least five of the six risk factors. One child meets the criteria for all six risk factors.

Anonymous	Gen	SEN	PP	Pg	File	File	Attendance	IDACI Rank
Child 127	M		eFSM	D	EHAF	con.c	81.41	817
Child 211	M	SEND	FSM	D		con.c	89.58	817
Child 213	M		FSM	D	EHAF	con.c	91.99	817
Child 222	M		PP+	D	EH	con.c	89.42	6560
Child 258	M		FSM	D	EH	con.c	96.72	6560
Child 274	M	SEND	eFSM	D	EH	con.c	81.09	817

Table 12 - Parent group D July 2017

Chart 5 presents the same information, however, use of a horizontal bar chart provides a clear visual of their needs.

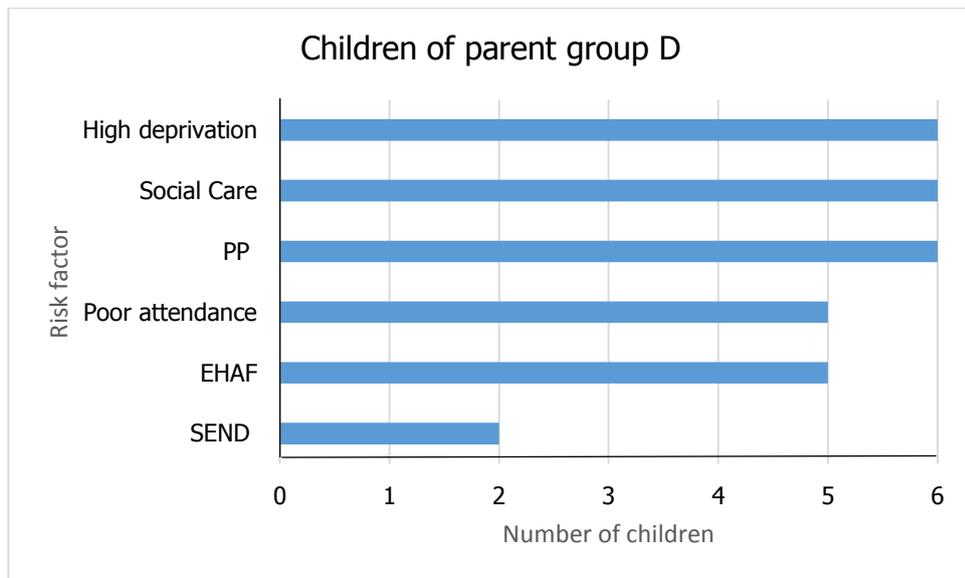


Chart 5 - Complexity of need (parent group D)

The risk factors are shown along the vertical axis with the number of children shown along the bottom line. All six children of PGD live in levels of high deprivation, receive the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged children and have needed social care intervention. Five of the six children have poor attendance. Five have needed an early help assessment. Two children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It has to be acknowledged that the group for analysis in this data set is small, however, the complexity of need for this group is evident.

The complexity of need in respect of each child is significant, but the question is whether this influences the ability of parents to work in partnership with the school. Parents face many difficulties in trying to support their children (Hill and Taylor 2004; Smethurst 2011 and Reay 2017) and the listed risk factors could add to this challenge. Chart 5 depicts the needs of PGD pupils, but it does not evidence other influential factors which potentially provide barriers for parents. Other factors might include, the background and upbringing of the parent. Parents may not be aware that preconceived ideas are an influence. The habitus (Bourdieu 1990) of parents may also be an influence. Reay (2017) argues that one of these barriers is being working class. In addition, due to previous experiences, for some parents simply walking onto school grounds can be a

barrier (Chynoweth 2016). All potential barriers to working in partnership are discussed during the initial meeting with PGD parents.

There are potential social factors which have not been presented in chart form but have formed part of this research. These include pupils who have a special educational need and/or disability (SEND). Whilst there is some difference, the evidence does not support the existence of a correlation between the four parent groups and children assessed as SEND. Of the 85 children assessed as SEND, across the two schools, 66% (n56) belong to PGB. Only three pupils (4%) from PGD are on the SEND register.

On a similar note, although the remaining PGD pupils are all boys, studies into parent group by gender provide no evidence that parental participation is affected by the child's gender. The evidence suggests that 73% of parents whose child is female fall into the PGA and PGB categories. A slightly higher statistic (78%) is found in relation to males. With regard to PGC and PGD the percentages are 27% and 22% respectively. Of possible significance is the fact that of the six children who met the PGD criteria at the Earl Primary School, after the intervention programme with parents had taken place, were all boys. Of the 18 PGD pupils at Danby Lane primary school, ten were boys and eight were girls.

In summary, the subsidiary research question asked whether there is a correlation between social factors and the ability for the different parental groups to work in partnership with the school. The primary school databases have been used to evidence a correlation between parental groups and deprivation and parental groups with pupil attendance. Pupils from PGD have an increased rate of persistent absence. Low attendance has the potential to impact on the child's ability to progress and succeed (Handcock, Gottfried and Zubrick 2018). This also applies to deprivation, where PGD were shown to live in higher levels of poverty. Referrals to specialist services were also significantly higher for PGD,

with 100% needing social care intervention. It is important to note, however, that a causal link has not been proven.

The next section will further explore the potential impact on progress and whether barriers to partnership can be overcome.

[Is there a correlation between parental partnership with the primary school, as identified through the parent partnership descriptors, and measured academic progress?](#)

A review of best practice in parental engagement requested by the DfE 2011, argued for a greater focus to be given to parental engagement in the education system. The review concluded that, 'Parental engagement has a large and positive impact on children's learning' (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011, p.2). The greater the levels of involvement, it argued, 'the more likely their children are to succeed' (2011, p.3). The findings reflected observations, within this research, on the relationship between parental participation and children's progress. This concept was explored at Earl primary school through the creation of the parental partnership descriptor. Literature states that the ability to measure engagement is limited (Hill and Taylor 2004; Hoover- Dempsey, et al. 2005 and DCSF 2008). This echoes the view of Goodall and Vorhaus (2011, p.9) who state; 'data on the impact on children's academic outcomes is largely absent'. The PPDs challenged and enhanced current understanding and provided the mechanism to undertake a study, to test for any correlation between parental partnership and educational progress. The theory that it was possible to measure the degree to which various levels of partnership with the school could be reflected in the child's progress was tested.

The search for a relationship between increased parental partnership and increased academic achievement during the primary school years was explored through a database analysis. The research journey, dating back to 2011, subjected the emerging evidence to a continuous examination annually. The first

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database analysis was used to test the theory that parental participation would make a difference to rates of progress for pupils. At the time (2011-2012), this formed part of my research at master's level (Chambers 2012, u.p). This exercise was completed on an annual basis, however, a dataset was captured for comparison three years later (2014 – 2015). A continuation of the longitudinal study was not possible post 2015, as 2016 saw the introduction of the new statutory assessment system at the end of key stages 1 and 2 (DfE 2014). This restricted the comparison of historical data from 2011-2012 with outcomes post 2015.

Data from Earl Primary school was the only source of information for the initial study. The data set included the average progress scores (APS) achieved by each child for three subjects, reading, writing, and mathematics. The objective was to measure these scores against parent participation, as identified by the parent descriptors. Two methods were used. The first was to convert the numerical performance data into an average progress score for each parent group. The second exercise, again using APS scores, was to calculate the number of pupils achieving the minimum expected progress (MEP) which is represented as a score of three or more points.

Chart 6 examines average pupil performance in 2011-12 and illustrates progress in three subjects reading, writing and mathematics.

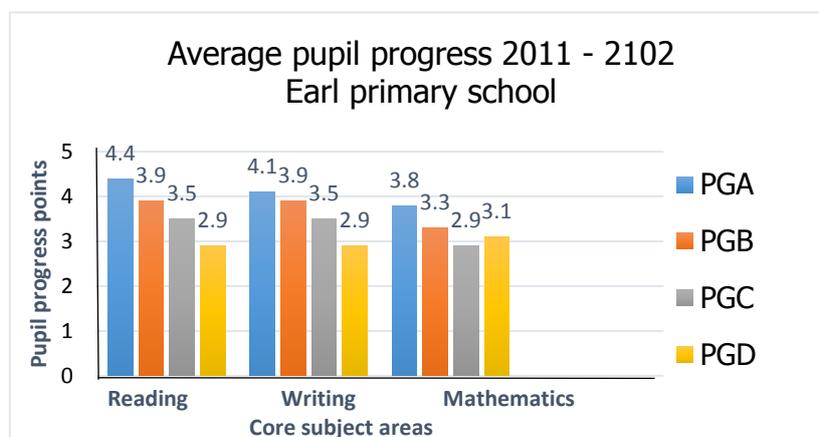


Chart 6 - Average progress by subject by parent group 2011-2012

The data is presented in three sets of four columns depicting the average progress levels for three subjects reading, writing and mathematics. Two hundred and eight children were on roll at this time (see table 9).

The results for reading indicate a near perfect descending relationship from 4.4 PGA to 2.9 PGD. The level of the relationship argues for a PCC of 0.99. A similar correlation is shown for the subject of writing PCC 0.98. The four columns relating to the subject of mathematics depict a reduction in average scores as measured against reading and writing with the exception of PGD who show an increase. This is evidenced with a PCC of 0.84. Notwithstanding the improvement in PGD the four columns evidence a descending relationship between PGA and PGD.

Chart 7 provides a visual presentation of the proportion of children who achieved minimum expected progress (3+ progress points) by the end on the school year 2011-12 by parent group in reading, writing and mathematics (Chambers 2012, p.35, u.p).

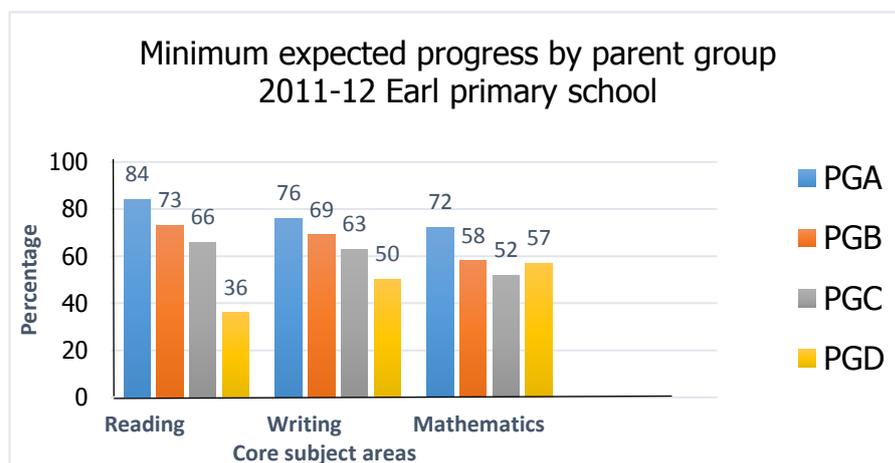


Chart 7 - Minimum expected progress (MEP) by parent group

In chart 7, each column depicts the percentage number of children, for each parent group, achieving the minimum expected progress (MEP) for each subject over one academic year. The results of the MEP exercise are similar to the configuration of outcomes shown in chart 8. What becomes evident is the lack

of progress for PGD pupils. Only one in three (36%) achieved minimum expected progress in reading. This statistic improves in the subject of writing where half of the children, whose parents are judged to be PGD, reach the minimum expected rate of progress. Some parents struggle to support their children when helping them to read and write, particularly if they struggle to read themselves (Reay 2017). As with the average scores shown in chart 8 the best subject for PGD pupils is mathematics where 57% (n=8) achieve MEP. Pearson's correlation coefficient for each of the four columns is, reading 0.95, writing 0.98 and mathematics 0.77.

The results, as shown, in charts 6 and 7 raise the question as to why children from PGD underachieve in reading but performed better in mathematics, where they outperform pupils from PGC and achieve similar outcomes to PGB. It can be seen from chart 8 that the gap between PGA and PGD in mathematics narrows considerably as compared with the subject of reading. Whether this is an ongoing phenomenon or a one off occurrence requires further research. The statistics show a difference of 48 percentage points in reading (84% - 36%). This is reduced to 15 percentage points (72% - 57%) in the subject of mathematics. The data from reading and writing provides a challenge to teachers and parents alike in order to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education. This research does not explore the variations across the subject areas.

The staff group at Earl primary school acknowledge the effectiveness of the parent descriptors to accurately characterise parental participation with the school. The 2011-12 studies demonstrated the ability of the parent descriptors to measure the relationship between parental partnership with the school and educational progress for their children. The correlation between parental participation provides some evidence that greater involvement in the child's learning is reflected in the child's learning and progress.

The concluding comments of the previous research dissertation (Chambers 2012, u.p) offered a clear vision for providing equality of opportunity for children.

Consider the impact if we could create a 'partnership mobility' so that parents from groups B, C and D could be inspired, motivated and educated to move up to higher groups; thus increasing the numbers of parents in Group A and B.

(Chambers 2012, p.45, u.p,)

The 2011-2012 findings led to small steps of change over time. Evidence suggested that parental partnership did have an impact on pupil progress. Literature (Hill and Taylor 2004; Campbell 2011 and Grayson 2013) supports this view. The key aspect of the doctoral research was to use this information to test for any continuation of the evidence found in the 2011 – 2012 studies, and if so accelerate the implementation of change. Where partnership was categorised as PGD, intervention and support was offered. The challenge was to examine the effect that promoting improved partnership within the primary school might have on children's progress over a number of years. Intervention took place at whole school level, targeting groups and also at an individual level, focussed on the needs of individual children within the primary school. The next section will explore whether improved partnership led to better progress and outcomes for pupils.

Are outcomes improved when intervention takes place?

The concluding comments from my previous research, to create a 'partnership mobility' (Chambers 2012, p.45, u.p) led to action within school, which took the form of targeted intervention based on needs (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011 and Grayson 2013). This subsidiary research question explores what intervention looked like and what impact this had and will be answered through the findings from interviews with parents, documentary analysis and case studies.

Strategies were designed to improve parental partnership and in particular those parents assessed as PGD. As the previous research concluded, the approaches employed to improve partnership began. They included:

- Parent Parliament
- Dads and Lads Club
- Workshops for Parents
- Parent Hub
- An invitation to talk with the head teacher

Datasets were captured at the end of each academic year. For the purpose of this research, as explained earlier, pupils from Year 1 to Year 5 were included in the database analysis. Changes were occurring in the dynamics of parental participation. Earl primary school was growing and overtime expanded by 15%. Although working in partnership became the new expected norm, the potential impact of this change was not realised until an analysis of the 2014 – 2015 data, which took place as part of this doctoral research.

Database analysis

The percentage number of those parents, Years 1 – 5 inclusive, assessed as PGA reduced from 12% of the school population in 2011-2012 to 9% by 2015. A reduction of three percentage points. PGB show an increase from 50% of children on roll 2011-2012 to 60%, 2014-2015. An increase of 10 percentage points. Parent group C reduced from 31% of school numbers in 2011-2012 to 28% in 2015. A reduction of 3 percentage points. The reduction of 4 percentage points in respect of PGD does not fully reflect the change that occurred. At the

end of the school year 2012, 14 children from PGD (Year 1 - Year 5) were on the school roll. This number more than halved to 6 (57%) by the end of 2015 (Year 1 – Year 5). Three parent groups saw a reduction in their representation of the school population. This totalled 10 percentage points. These reductions were absorbed by PGB.

My school policy to improve parental participation had produced, with the exception of PGA, which was already high, a strategy that encouraged parents to engage more in their children’s education. The question remained, would improve participation with parents be reflected in improved educational outcomes for children? The results of this change are shown in detail in chart 8 and as an overall picture in chart 9.

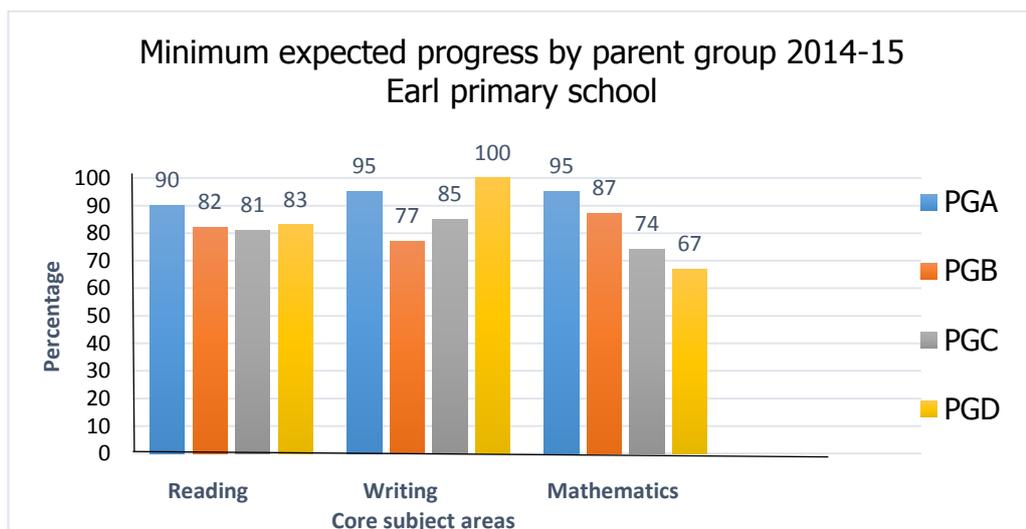


Chart 8 - The proportion of children making the MEP by parent group

The three years of the school promoting greater participation from parents was evidenced in improved progress as shown in the 2014-2015 study. The effect of the various approaches to improve partnerships between parents and the school caused significant changes to occur. Results from the 2015 dataset showed the configuration of parent groups forming a descending relationship from PGA – PGD and in this respect not too dissimilar to the 2011-12 studies (Chambers 2012 p.35, u.p). Major adjustments, mainly to parent groups C and D, were evident. Chart 9 demonstrates the changes that occurred. As stated earlier, Year 6 pupils

were not included in this comparison. It is however interesting to note that 100% of Year 6 pupils from each of the parent groups made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

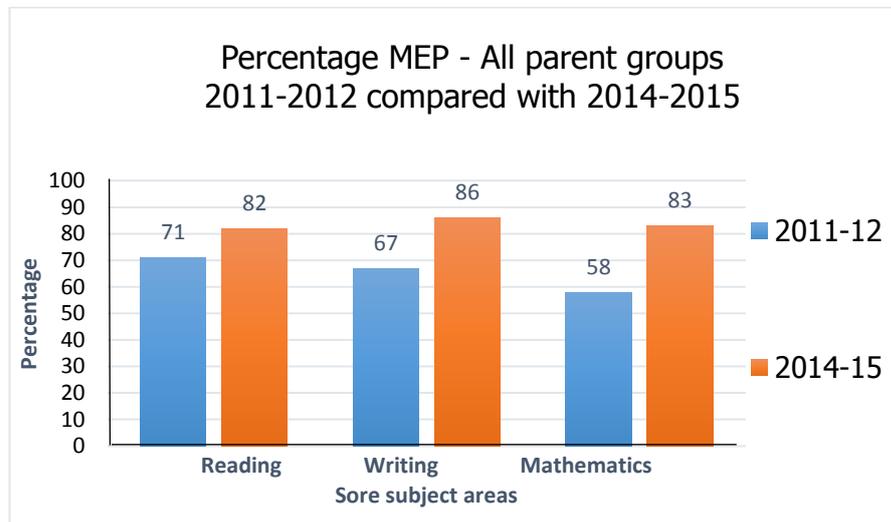


Chart 9 - Proportion of children (all parent groups) who achieved MEP

Chart 9 compares the changes that occurred in respect of minimum expected progress (progress of 3+) during the years 2011-12 (Chambers 2012, p.35, u.p) to 2014-15. Chart 9 demonstrates a noticeable improvement in MEP for each subject. A validation of three years of working for improved parent partnership. At the end of the school year 2011-12, 71% of children achieved minimum expected progress in reading. This increased by nine percentage points to 82% by 2015. Further progress was realised in the subject of writing advancing from 67% to 86%. A 19% improvement. The subject of mathematics advanced 25 percentage points. From a starting point of 58% in 2012, the MEP outcomes measure 83% for 2015, an improvement of 25 percentage points. The increase in effective parent partnership could include the ability of parents to adapt (Bourdieu 1990) to new expectations. While a plethora of influential factors could have contributed to this positive shift, I argue that parental participation is at the forefront of the improved outcomes.

The database analysis forms a vital part of the research findings. In addition to the database findings, documentary evidence, interviews with parents and case studies also evidence the change that occurred and the impact of greater parental partnership with the school on educational outcomes.

Documentary evidence – School reports

In addition to intervention for families, which included meeting with them and highlighting barriers, changes were made to the school reports. Historically the reports had talked about the learning, progress and attitudes of learning. The new approach included sharing our expectations of parents, in order for pupils to be ready for school on a daily basis. The school readiness boxes, at the back of the report, encourage parental participation.

School readiness
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely
Your child is always in the correct uniform
Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
Your child's homework is always complete and on time
Your child reads regularly at home
Your child practices spellings at home
Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
You attended parents evening
Further encouragement to support your child's learning would make a difference

Figure 11 - School readiness taken from the annual school report (Y3 PGD Boy)

The school reports, one from each of the case study children can be seen in more detail in appendix 20. Within this appendix, for each child a historic report is presented alongside a post intervention report. The clarity of expectation is clear. The expectation of greater parental accountability for their child's learning has been the most contentious issue within this research. The concept of accountability is supported by Macbeath (1994, p.214), claiming that one should 'make demands' on parents. The documentary analysis identified that there was consistency in the directness of the class teacher and head teacher of what the expectations were and how the parent could make a difference. For example, 'In addition to this, [Boy] will need to practise spellings and his reading at home in order to reach age related expectation in these areas' (Y3 Boy PGD). This

direct approach, to identifying points for development for individual pupils, was another method of early intervention. Highlighting to parents what needed to improve. The case study provides an example of how this 'school readiness box' does impact on parent partnership and how clear targets lead to improved support from home.

Documentary evidence – Home/school diaries

The consistent approach from teachers in the school reports is echoed through comments made in the home/school diaries. Throughout the analysis the suggestion of additional support for pupils is evident. A time period of four weeks was chosen for the analysis as an appropriate sample size. The sample included children across the year groups (see table 3). Interestingly in two of the year groups PGD diaries were not available as they were lost and not used by parents or teachers. In another year group there was no child of PGD. The approach was to explore the number of times pupils read at home and the additional support they received in school. There was a clear difference between the number of times pupils of PGA read at home with those in PGC. One child from PGC read on 4 occasions (across the four weeks) with parents in sharp contrast to the considerable 20+ comments from PGA. The opposite of this was evident within the school setting. Children from PGC received the greatest intervention from school staff. Evidence of reading with the class teacher on eight occasions and an additional adult on 12 occasions. This was a contrast to PGA where pupils read to the teacher (on average) on three occasions and ten occasions of reading with an additional adult. It could be argued that this additional support is for other specified needs, for example, pupil premium funding or SEN provision. However, it is apparent from the findings listed above, that pupils whose parents are less engaged in partnership with the school do benefit from additional adult support when in school.

Interviews with parents

Interviews with parents provided a significant contribution to the research. All participating parents understood the reasons for targeting those parents judged

to be PGD and support the idea of it being a school improvement priority. I interviewed 11 parents representing PGA, PGB and PGC. Transcripts were made of the interviews and key themes were analysed as shown in table 13. Full details are available in appendix 12a – 12i.

Themes	Number of related comments and number of parents
Parental relationship with the teacher	10 comments from 8 parents
Time and/or capacity of parent	3 comments from 2 parents
Age of the child	6 comments from 6 parents
Role of the school	11 comments from 7 parents
Understanding the grading system	8 comments from 6 parents
How parents saw their ability to support the child	16 comments from 10 parents
Emerging themes	
Attitudes towards the grading system	7 comments from 6 parents
Stereotyping of parents (from parents)	1 comment from 1 parent
Attitudes of the child towards parents supporting them.	5 comments from 4 parents

Table 13 - Number of parent comments for each of the themes

Interviews with parents highlighted issues where intervention would make a difference. The highest level of response related to how parents saw their own ability to support the child. The majority of these had a negative view of not doing enough for their children. It has been possible to support parents and reinforce the positive work they are doing. Other issues were raised which could lead to immediate action, for example, the role played by the class teacher emerged as a key characteristic of the difficulties expressed when engaging in a shared relationship (5 parents expressed concern). The personality of the teacher was mentioned as an issue causing a barrier by parent 5, who commented;

I don't want to be rude but it's like talking to a brick wall, there is no two-way.

Such issues were easily addressed through professional development meetings with staff. A second example was the timings of meetings, which was raised by parent 7, again this was simple to rectify. Parent 7 also added that teachers need to be prepared to learn from parents too, which supports the view of Ravn (2001), Hill and Taylor (2004) and Hattie (2009). Previously, I identified that universities do not prepare teachers for this relationship (Chambers 2012, u.p). When discussing pupils who have been excluded from school, Stevens (2018, P.781) states that relationships with school staff were often difficult. Parents refer to contact with school staff as 'burdensome, ill-informed and unsupportive'. The degree to which teacher training should incorporate working in partnership with parents cannot be developed further in the thesis but the findings from this research suggests that the issue should be debated.

Case studies

The case studies further develop the evidence base gained from the parent interviews. The two families, initially judged to be PGD, have worked in partnership with school leaders to improve the partnership. As stated earlier (see figure 9), the case study of the whole school approach underpins the research, however, the individual case studies tell the story of the impact of intervention for two families and 'corroborate and augment' (Yin 2009, p.103) other findings. The full case study report is available in document three (Chambers 2017, u.p).

Through the use of case studies, the findings from the previous methods can be triangulated to increase validity (Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006). As a reminder, PGD families were targeted for intervention. Preliminary meetings with PGD families presented a challenge for both the school and the parents concerned (see appendix 21a and 21b). The meetings were driven by the need to better understand why some parents did not get involved in their child's learning, Smethurst (2011, p27) argues that this could include 'their own schooling...mental health issues...drink or drug problems'. Parents were given the opportunity to share potential barriers. The meetings also provided a means to try and positively encourage improved collaboration as this was seen as essential

(Hassink and Levtov 2016). When asked about the initial meeting during the interviews, both families found the initial meeting difficult. The first parent commented:

Er...definitely hit home, kind of woke me ideas up, erm it wasn't a good feeling to be honest with you, but it was like a kick up the backside to say, you know, wake me up.

(case study 1 (dad), see appendix 15a)

The parents from case study 2 expressed different views, mum was "annoyed to start with" and dad said "I wouldn't go as far as to say that I was offended or upset about it, I was just surprised that we weren't doing enough" (case study 2 (mum and dad), see appendix 15b).

The meetings with PGD were not purely about holding parents to account, clear targets were set for both parents and the school, based on need (Grayson 2013). The meetings were a step towards improving communication and attempting to adapt the habitus; to alter the 'social trajectories' (Bourdieu 1990, p.60) of parents. Parents saw this process as two-way and raised several issues which could be easily rectified by school leaders. The case studies demonstrate the differences for those children. The case studies provide clear evidence of how taking the time to talk issues through, with the framework of a 'structured conversation' (DCFS 2009, p.32), led to a positive move from PGD to PGB. The approach to working with their children and indeed the school changed significantly. A key aspect of this for parents was the realisation that their own actions (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012) have made a difference for their children. These two case studies are representative of the other meetings with PGD parents and the positive outcomes data for these pupils.

Does the relationship between parental partnerships with school influence factors beyond the education environment, including social interactions, propensity to offend, and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies?

The ability to test for a potential correlation with pupils as they move through their secondary school education, has been a significant development in the quest to understand effects on the education and life chances of children and the level of parental participation. I will be presenting one chart in response to this research question. Supported by the findings from questionnaires to specialist workers.

Database analysis

The Local Authority database reflects outcomes for 147 children who historically attended Earl primary school. It is important to note that intervention (working with parents to improve the partnership) did not take place for these pupils. They have now progressed through secondary school (see table 11 for details). Danby Lane was not included in this aspect of the research as PPD assessments had not been applied historically for their pupils. The key statistics within this section are the numbers within each of the parent groups, PGA (n=22), PGB (n=55), PGC (n=48) and PGD (n=22). In total there were 44 referrals to the different specialist services as evidenced in the three management systems (see table 4 for a detailed explanation). In summary, the youth system captures referrals which include the propensity to offend and anti-social interactions in the wider community. The family assessment system include referral to specialist services for assessment and intervention. The education system reflects referrals for those who are missing education, or have been excluded from school. The referrals included in chart 10 shows the percentage of referrals made across all three management systems. Parent group references are shown in the key at the bottom of the chart

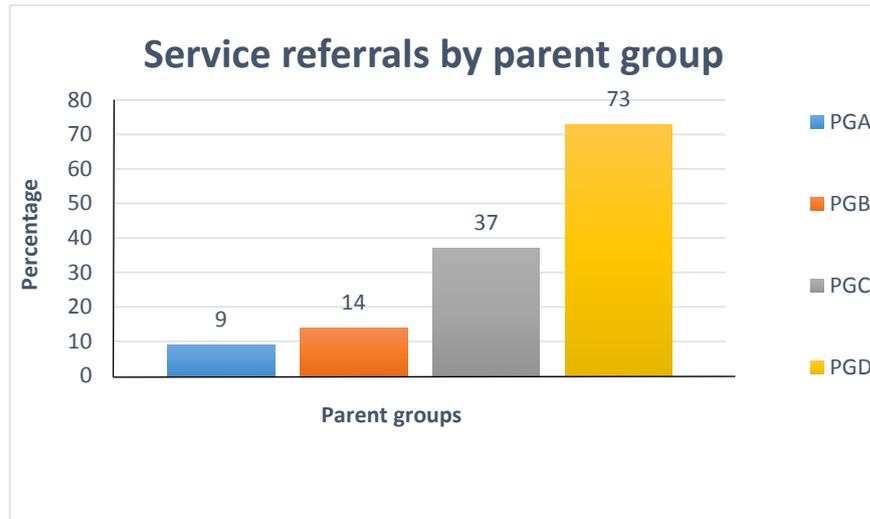


Chart 10 - Combined service requests from all three cohorts.

Across the three cohorts, 22 children are associated with PGA. Of this group 9% (n=2) had required specialist services support. The demand on services increased with children from PGB where 14% (n=8) required support. The increase for children within PGC is substantial at 37% (n=18). Children whose parents are categorised as PGD show a significant need for specialist services since leaving primary school. Sixteen of the 22 children were subject to a referral, a rate of 73%. The difference in referral rates from PGA to PGD is 64 percentage points.

The evidence from the data shown in chart 10 indicates a strong relationship between parent group categories and referrals to support services post primary education. The test for the correlation coefficient returns a significant high value of 0.95 with regard to the percentage of referrals. However, the findings do not prove a causal relationship. This research does not prove that children whose parents do not engage with school will experience the same outcomes. It does suggest however, that children from PGA are less likely to require support from specialist services than children from PGD. The level of support needed from specialist services is presented in depth when evidencing whether this group of

children should be classed as a vulnerable group. Pring challenges categorising children as a group:

Is there not a danger of ignoring those individual difference, reflected in their own distinctive consciousness, in order to treat each if the several thousand children as identical units to be added together, subtracted and compared? How can this approach to research be reconciled with the apparent uniqueness of each individual?

(Pring 2015, p.50)

The view of Pring (2015) resonates with my own. Each child and family need to be treated as individuals, worthy of a unique assessment to meet their different needs (Grayson 2013). This however, does not mean that we should not acknowledge the level of vulnerability of any group of children who share similar characteristics. This view is echoed by the specialist workers who participated in the research through the completion of questionnaire.

Questionnaires

I was keen to include the views of specialist workers, who provide family assessments and support at times of crisis. Literature influenced the types of questions asked. When creating the questionnaire, I considered how it would be analysed and how these findings would contribute to the evidence base for the subsidiary research question. It was imperative that the questionnaire was not onerous for colleagues. The Likert scale (Oppenheim 2000) was applied to many statements within the questionnaire, with the number one representing definitely disagree and number five representing definitely agree. A total of 12 questionnaires were returned, from specialist workers working within the social care department, with a cumulative experience in excess of 152 years. As an aide memoire, each of the participants have been renamed with the letter F and a number.

The Likert scale was utilised for the section which referred to the relationship between children and their parents as shown in figure 12. The responses to these questions varied with some specialists scoring this as a number five and others as a number one. Consequently, the average response to these questions was close to 3.0. All responses from the questionnaire have been transferred onto an Excel document for analysis (see appendix 19).

Statement	1= Definitely disagree 5=Definitely agree
All parents are keen to do the best for their children	1 2 3 4 5
Some parents do not think it is their responsibility to support their children	1 2 3 4 5
Some young people do not want parental support	1 2 3 4 5

Figure 12 - Statements which divided the participants

There was however, some consistency in that all specialist workers recognise that the role of parents is fundamental to the development of the child. I had not expected to see such a variation in the responses to these statements. Most parents are keen to do the best for their children and understand they have a responsibility, some simply lack the skills and knowledge to do so (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005; Smethurst 2011 and Chynoweth 2016).

Following a process of piloting the questionnaire, I had hoped that the questions would be clear and unambiguous. However, on reflection, one of the questions caused some confusion and could have suggested that there was no room for individual differences (see figure 13). While this had not been intended, it did provoke some levels of challenge.

Do you think that there is a relationship between parental attitude and the child's behaviour?	
**(delete as appropriate)	
Parental attitude	Child attitude
If parent in pro-education	** Pro education/ anti- education
If parent is anti-education	** Pro education/ anti- education
If parent is pro-law and order	** Pro law and order/anti law and order
If parent is anti-law and order	** Pro law and order/anti law and order
If parent is pro aggression	** Pro aggression/anti aggression
If parent is anti- aggression	** Pro aggression/anti aggression

Figure 13 - Cause and effect question

The challenge within many responses to this question was that such a generalisation was not appropriate. Comments include:

- 'I don't think that this can be generalised as feel this is unique to the child and other inputs they receive and the child's own personal experiences' (F4).
- 'That does not mean that in all cases that will occur' (F11)
- 'This isn't that simple. And for all statements, there are exceptions to the rule' (F10).

It has been interesting to analyse the responses from those working within specialist services. Some of the participants suggest that young people will deliberately choose the opposite approach to that of their parents.

I feel that the comments are case specific and you cannot assume that if a parent acts in a particular way. This will result in the children responding in a specific way' (F5).

F6 contributes to the debate stating;

This is not the case in all the children and families as when you see extreme cases of pro-education then this can have the reverse impact and see children be anti-education. (F6)

F6 does however provide a summary at the end of the text of; 'I think that the key is pro-support for the children = positive choices and outcomes' (F6). This comment supports the findings of the subsidiary research question that the relationship between parental partnerships with school does influence factors beyond the education environment.

This debate as to parental influence on children, is further developed by another participant who states; 'I have known children to challenge parents' attitude or be totally the opposite of their parents' attitude' (F4). Apple (1996) argues that children are influenced by many things, this is supported by F8 who states; 'I feel that children's attitudes are affected by multiple influences, not solely by their parents' attitudes' (F8).

I consider the responses within the questionnaires to be valid and well-informed. They add validity to the rest of the questionnaire, as it is clear that participants have been honest and shared their opinions freely. The concept of generalisation is particularly important to this research. Pring argues:

There would seem to be certain aspects of being human which enable us to make tentative generalisations about how individuals will perform or react, while at the same time recognising that there will inevitably be exceptions to the rule.

(2010, p.50)

As stated earlier, I am not suggesting that being a child of PGD will lead to specific outcomes, however, the evidence does suggest that a lack of parental partnership with the child's education can also influence future life chances.

The most valuable contribution to this research method has been the free response questions (Oppenheim 2000). All of the participants agreed that support needs to be personalised to meet the needs of individual families, for example, 'Support has to be tailored to what the family NEEDS and not what we feel would benefit them' (F2). This echoes my approach to working with PGD families, taking the time to complete an assessment pertinent to need (Goodall and Vorhaus 2011). F5 supports this and argues 'it is our role to identify any needs as quickly as possible to work with and support the children and families

and help them to achieve their potential'. F2 takes the needs based analysis further suggesting that parents be empowered to 'facilitate this themselves in future rather than rely on social care'. This cannot be achieved unless parents have the cultural capital (Bourdieu 1990) to support them through the process. Reay (2017, p.73) argues that support for families comes too late 'after the damage has been done'. Once specialist services are involved the ability for parents to be empowered is significantly reduced. This aspect will be further developed in the findings of the final research question. F10 states;

There remains a hard to reach group of parents who are unsupportive, but also unwilling to change...securing this change is crucial for their children to do well in education, employment or their relationships.

This statement concurs with my findings and supports the habitus (Bourdieu 1990) debate.

Specialist professionals, working with families at a time of crisis, value the role that parents play and consider the partnership to be influential in producing positive outcomes for children. The statement: 'When parents do support me and my work, the outcomes for the child are better', gained a positive response, with an average of 4.8. Ten of the 12 participants 'definitely agreed'. In addition, an average of 4.9 was returned for the statement: 'Parents play a vital role in outcomes for their children' with 11 of the 12 participants definitely agreeing with the statement. The stages of intervention offered at Earl primary school acknowledge the importance of this partnership. The intervention is more than academic outcomes, it is also about children seeing their parents taking an interest in them and their schooling. F3 supports this approach and claims that children 'seek their parents' approval and validation'. F3 goes on to say that the 'circumstances of your upbringing directly impacts on your achievement prospects' this view is echoed through the literature (Campbell 2011; Goodall and Vorhaus 2011 and Smethurst 2011). On this point, F4 suggests that 'all parents should be required to access parenting courses through the child's education or

childcare provider'. The support has to be tailored to meet the needs (Grayson 2013) of the families. A one size fits all approach is not appropriate.

Two methods were utilised to answer the subsidiary research question asking whether the relationship between parental partnerships with school influence factors beyond the education environment, including social interactions, propensity to offend, and the need for professional intervention from partner agencies. The database analysis clearly demonstrates a strong correlation between the parental groups and the need for specialist services. The questionnaire produced some relevant and interesting discussion points, however, the overall response was that there is a group of parents who are difficult to reach and engage and this can ultimately impact on outcomes for their children.

Should children whose parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the school and their child's learning, be classed as a vulnerable group?

The answer to this research questions draws on the findings from the four previous subsidiary research questions, with some additional database analysis findings. This section will summarise the contributing findings from the questionnaires to specialist services, interviews with parents, documentary evidence, the case studies and database analysis.

Thus far, my findings have provided a correlation between parental partnership and academic progress. Specialist workers consider a positive partnership with parents to be beneficial. Case studies have demonstrated that when intervention with parents takes place, opportunities for children can improve. There is a correlation between a complexity of need of pupils and the degree to which parents engage effectively with the school. Finally, children whose parents are categorised as PGD are shown to need the intervention of specialist services, to a greater extent than the other parent groups.

The support given to this research by the Local Authority has to be recognised. Information held on their management systems helped to further explore the relationship between parent groups and children's life chances. One hundred and forty-seven children, who historically attended Earl primary school, were represented across the three cohorts. Parent Partnership Descriptors were completed when pupils attended primary school. The database from the primary school was combined with information held in the Local Authority management systems. The three cohorts of pupils preceded the introduction of the intervention programme during the time spent at primary school.

Within this section, there are two charts, one table and it concludes with a side by side chart listed as figure 14. This final figure makes a comparison between two very different sets of statistics. The previous research question explored the

44 referrals to specialist services. This section moves beyond the number of referrals to explore how many children have needed multiple referrals or indeed referrals to more than one specialist service. As explained, the colour coding system of red, amber, green is used. Single referrals are recorded as green, amber reflects two or three referrals while those in red reflect four or more referrals. In the previous research question, a referral coded red is recorded as one referral.

This section provides an accurate picture of need based on the number of repeat referrals. It could be argued that four referrals may be too low to warrant a red rating. I disagree, whether four referrals are made or twenty, it is too many. The decision to RAG rate the referrals was not part of research plan. However, more information, to quantify the level of need, was necessary. The RAG rating system has provided detailed information about life chances for young people. Chart 11 presents the colour coded analysis of referrals and illustrates a potential correlation between parent groups and the volume of referrals.

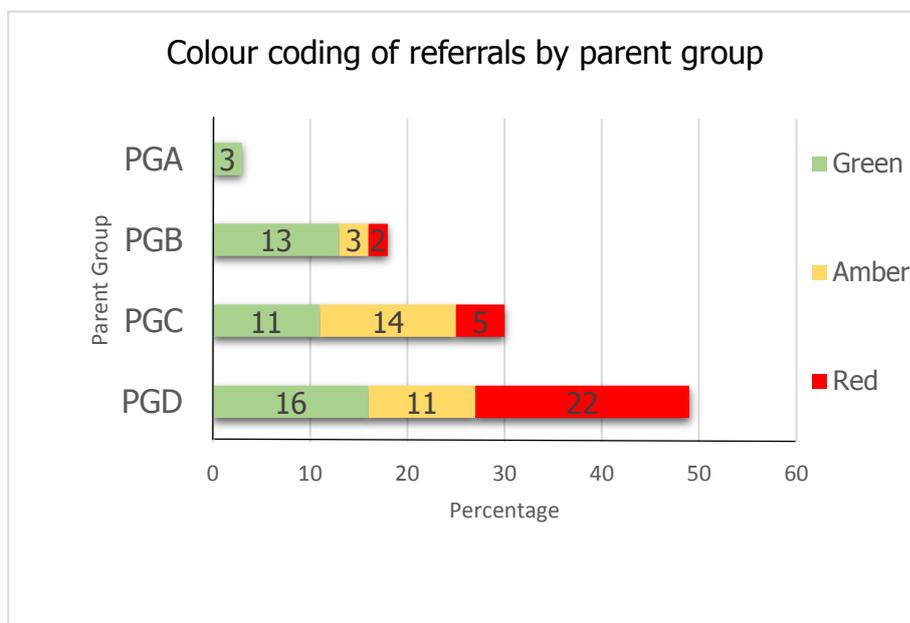


Chart 11 - Colour coding of referrals by parent group

Forty four young people required a referral to one of the three services. These children produced a total of 63 referrals, 43% green (n=27) 28% amber (n=18)

and 28% red (n=18). The findings presented in chart 11 suggests an increase in the percentage of referrals from PGA through to PGD. The colour coding indicates the percentage number and frequency of referrals by each parent group. To understand the bar chart, taking PGB as an example, it can be seen that 13% (n=8) of the total referrals are colour coded green. Three percent (n=2) are coded amber with 2% (n=1) meeting the red criteria. The colour formation changes from being entirely green at PGA, predominantly green/amber at PGB with 2% (n=1) coded red, and again, predominantly green/amber at PGC with 5% coded red. The percentage number of referrals show an increase in repeat referrals (amber and red) from 5% PGB to 19% PGC.

The lowest number of and percentage of referrals are made by PGA at 3% (n=2). This figure increases to 18% (n=11) PGB; 30% (n=19) PGC and culminating at 49% (n=31) PGD. The percentage number of repeat referrals follow a similar pattern. The evidence suggests a significant increase through progressing through the four parent groups. From a starting point of zero repeat referrals, this progresses to 5% (n=3) PGB; 19% (n=12) and finally 33% (n=21) for PGD. The evidence from PGD shows a substantial increase in repeat referrals. Although PGD represents 15% (n=22) of the 147 children in this dataset, they make up 49% (n=31) of all referrals. In total 18 referrals are colour coded red and 14 of these are attributed to PGD. PGD therefore account for 78% (n=14) of all red referrals. Reflecting on literature, Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005, p.109) argue that 'parents high in efficacy ... are likely to persist in the face of challenges or obstacles and work their way through difficulties to successful outcomes'. This appears to be evident in the small number of green referrals for PGA.

In addition to the RAG rating approach, the breakdown by parent group of the 63 referrals is presented in table 14 below. It is important to note that for some children, referrals have been made to more than one service. Total referrals exceed the number of children subject to a referral. In the case of PGD 22 children generated 31 referrals creating a percentage referral rate of 141%.

Parental Group	Number of children	Number of referrals	% of total referrals	% of cohort
A	22	2	3%	9%
B	55	12	18%	22%
C	48	18	30%	38%
D	22	31	49%	141%
Total	147	63	100%	**

Table 14 - Table of referrals across the parental group

The findings clearly represent a significantly increased need for specialist support for children whose parents belong to PGD, indeed 16 times more likely than PGA. It could be argued that the level of partnership with the primary school is a product of influential factors or indeed parental choice. However, the need for specialist intervention is not choice, it is a necessity.

The findings reflect the need for increased specialist services during secondary school. There are many unanswered questions as to the exact nature of the referrals which would perhaps further inform the dynamics between the parent child, including the social capital between them (Bourdieu 199), and the parent school relationships. The management systems at the Local Authority will hold this information, however, such detailed information falls beyond the scope of this research. The research, as it stands, reveals evidence of a need for an effective partnership that contributes to academic progress at primary school and in turn impacts on life chances of children during adolescence and young adulthood.

In addition to the number of referrals captured in July 2017, it has to be acknowledged that year on year the number of referrals increase. Chart 12 shows the growing need for specialist intervention as children move through secondary school. Cohort 1 (n=54) were the first to leave the primary setting. Cohort 2 (n=47) and cohort 3 (n=46) followed in consecutive years. Cohort 1 had produced 30 referrals, Cohort 2 accrued 20 referrals and cohort 3 being, the last cohort to leave, produced 13 referrals. The chart depicts the increasing number of referrals year on year, suggesting that demands on services increase

as pupils move towards adulthood. It is important to emphasise that each cohort represents a different group of children.

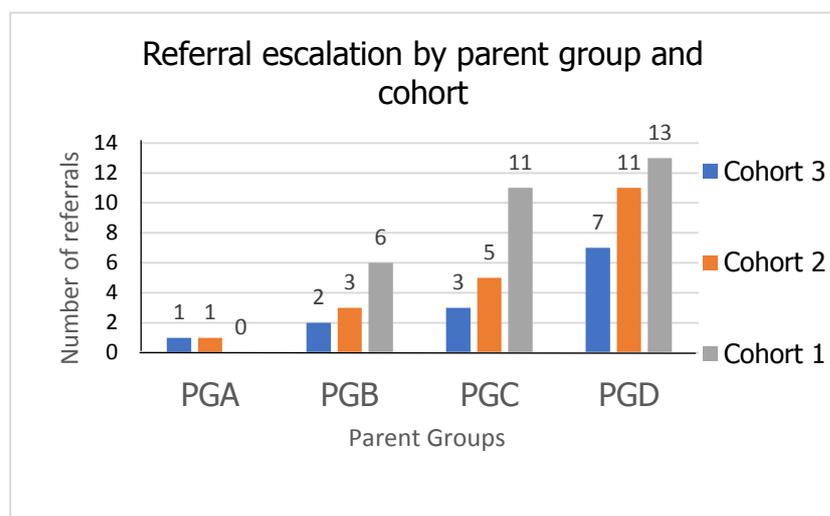


Chart 12 - Referral escalation by cohort and parent group.

Chart 12 shows that children from PGB, PGC and PGD follow a similar trend. Each year more children are being referred to specialist services. The chart shows an accumulative growth of between 10 – 13 referrals per year. Cohort 3, who were the last to leave primary school have the lowest referral rate 28% (n=13) of the 46 children. Seven of these children were PGD. The referral rate increases with cohort 2 who produced a referral rate of 43% (n=20). Over half (n=11) of cohort 2 were generated by PGD. Cohort 1 accumulated the most referrals, a total of 30. Again PGD, although a small group, required the most referrals. At the time the data was captured, only six of the 22 children from PGD, did not require a referral to specialist services. Moreover, too many referrals for PGD were colour coded red. The referral rate is exacerbated by the length of time pupils are within the secondary school system.

Reflecting on the early stages of this research, parents were categorised according to the level of parental collaboration with the school and the child's learning. At the stage of categorisation, the behaviour or academic progress of the children did not form part of the process. In 2012 the correlation between parental partnership and academic progress was identified (Chambers 2012, u.p).

This evidence is reintroduced and presented to the left hand side in figure 14. The data presents the combined average pupil progress in reading, writing and mathematics (the core subjects) for the year 2012 alongside the parent groups. The expected rate of progress, at that time across the core subjects, was 9.0 points. This information was a key finding at that time and is indeed now evident in the level of referrals to specialist services from the different parent groups. The percentage referral rate to services is calculated by the number of referrals made by each parent group. For example, in the case of PGA, 22 pupils produced 2 referrals a referral rate of 9%. The data presented in figure 14 shows a potential pathway that can be experienced by children as they progress from primary school through to secondary school. Two sets of data are shown side by side.

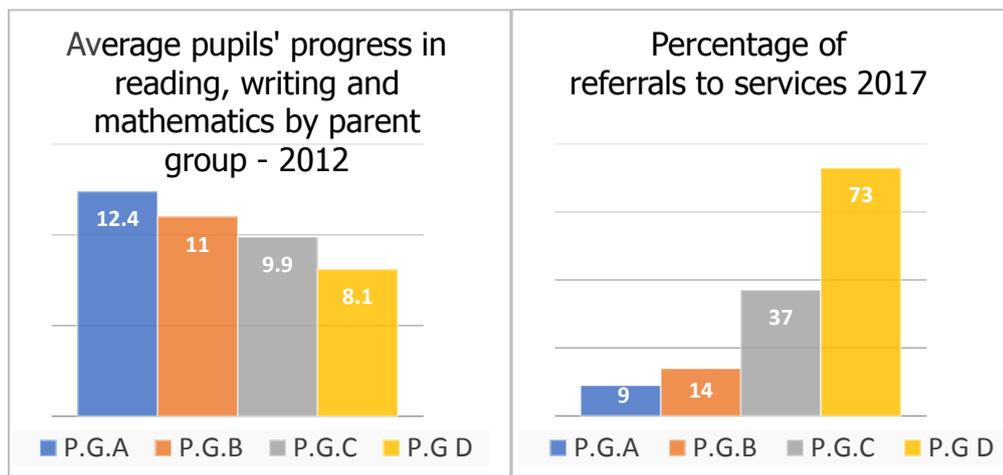


Figure 14 - Life chances pathway.

As a reminder, the 2012 data (Chambers 2012, u.p) refers to pupils from Year 1 to Year 5 who were on roll at Earl primary school at that time. Three of the five year groups (cohorts) have been tracked as part of this research project and the data was captured in July 2017. The data shown in the four columns to the right of figure 14 show the percentage of referrals to specialist services.

The rationale for presenting the data in this way is to demonstrate the relationship between a decline in academic progress at the primary school and an increase in referrals during secondary school for those pupils who did not

benefit from intervention. A high average progress score of 12.4 in core subjects achieved by PGA corresponds with the low level (9%) of referrals to services. A reduction in the average score across the subjects attained by PGB and PGC is reflected in a slight increase in referrals for both parental groups. Finally, PGD shows the lowest level of progress and the highest need for specialist services. Together, the evidence from two different research projects, involving many of the same children, present a clear relationship. The relationship is between the level of parental partnership in the primary school and the correlation with academic progress and ultimately life chances and opportunities in preparation for adult life.

The absence of a positive partnership with the school and the child's learning is evident. A relationship that is also evident as children move through their secondary school years. I have identified a small group of parents, who are absent from school at the early stages of primary education. They show little commitment to the child's learning and do not work in partnership with the school. As the child moves through the schooling system, the increase in demands on specialist services becomes progressively more evident. My evidenced informed theory is to categorise this group of children when in primary school, as a vulnerable group. Identify the need when the children are still young, support the parents through a focused needs based assessment and be clear about the positive difference a positive partnership can make. Share the expectations with parents and work together to make a difference for all children.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

My thesis 'Parents in Partnership' has set out the current arguments and expertise of academics within the field of engaging parents with their child's education. Literature has not only informed the direction and content of the project, but also my approach to working in partnership with parents. Literature was clear that the absence of a measurement tool, to categorise the level of partnership, meant that any potential impact on outcomes for children could not be quantified. The consistent application of the PPDs enabled the first appraisal of the parent/school partnership to be made. The PPDs enabled the contribution made by parents, to their child's learning, to be set against a hierarchical system. The results from this appraisal were set against academic progress and returned a high correlation. When parents are effectively involved with their child's learning, children succeed. I set out to answer my research question asking whether children whose parents do not engage in a productive partnership with the school and their child's learning, should be classed as a vulnerable group. The findings support my argument for this to be the case. Highlighting this group of children from the earliest opportunity means that support can be offered to both the children and their families.

The findings identify a life chances pathway that begins at the earliest stages of a child's educational journey. A brief summary of the findings begins with the correlation between parent partnership with the school and pupils' progress. Analysis of progress data identified inequalities, as children from PGD did not make the same strong progress as their peers. The most striking example related to progress in reading where, prior to intervention, one in three (36%) achieved the minimum expected progress score, in comparison to the 84% of PGA. Intervention, using the PPDs as a tool, was a necessity.

Inviting parents in to share concerns and plan for improved partnership working was a positive step. The partnership between parents and the school changed

significantly after that initial meeting, as demonstrated in the case studies. Although parents found the meeting a challenge, targets for home and school were clear and the process began. Parents began to feel empowered to work with their children, developing patience and implementing strategies as suggested during the meetings. Parents could see that what they did made a difference for their children, developing self-esteem for both the children and themselves. A data capture evidencing pupils' progress after intervention, demonstrates that improving partnership working with parents does make a difference. Whilst these improvements could be influenced by many factors, I believe that parental partnership is one of them.

One of the points for discussion during a PGD meeting, if applicable, would be attendance. The majority of children from PGD do not attend school regularly, indeed over half are judged to be persistent absentees and the average attendance for PGD was recorded at 89%, which is considerably lower than national averages. This influential factor can be identified and addressed. Some of the contributing risk factors for PGD cannot be changed by working in partnership with the school, however they warrant inclusion. For example, the findings suggest a correlation between parental partnership and levels of deprivation, with 71% of PGD children living in the most deprived households. This is supported by the findings from the pupil premium analysis, which found that all PGD children were in receipt of the pupil premium grant.

The correlation between parental groups and risk factors continues. All PGD children have needed social care intervention and 83% have needed specialist support from the early help team during their time in primary school. The findings from the Local Authority highlighted a strong relationship between parent partnership and the demand for specialist services post primary education. Pupils from PGD represent 15% of the children in the dataset, yet they account for 49% of referrals overall and most significantly, 78% of red referrals. They are 16 times more likely to need specialist support than PGA. The challenges faced by

this group of children grow as they move through school and present potential limitations to what they can go onto achieve.

At no point in this research are children identified as being at fault, the partnership is the responsibility of parents and school leaders. Any gaps in the partnership must be identified and rectified. This can be achieved using the PPDs at an early stage of the child's education with a termly process of review. If weaknesses are not resolved the pathway has the potential of leading towards a consequence of unintended yet critical outcomes.

Dissemination of my research

I have had the privilege of disseminating my work. This has included written publications for school leaders in the headteacher update magazine (Chambers 2015 and Chambers 2018) and speaking at a number of leadership conferences. This has included local conferences in Nottinghamshire for school leaders and national conferences, for example at Birmingham National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and in central London. The response from delegates and readers of the articles has been positive. The PPDs have been distributed to over 20 schools across the country and I have held conversations with individual leaders regarding the most successful process of implementation. Following the conference at the NEC, a headteacher in Northampton made contact via email. She wrote:

Just a quick thank you for your inspiring workshop on Friday. Was great to hear of strategies that actually have worked! We continually try to engage our hard to reach parents. Could you send me the descriptors you mentioned please?

The descriptors were shared and we spoke for some time about the approach to take, particularly regarding the initial meeting with parents.

The good practice at Earl Primary was acknowledged in the annual Ofsted report (Ough 2016). As a result, I had the privilege of presenting to Her Majesty's

Inspectors (HMI) in Nottingham and London. I have also presented to academics and valued the challenge and feedback. The first of these was Nottingham Trent University in 2017, at the Research Festival. The second was part of the British Education Research Association (BERA) conference, held at Northumbria University, Newcastle in 2018. I was anxious about the questions that I might be asked at both venues. There was no need to be apprehensive, as I could answer the questions and provide the evidence to support my response. As a result of the BERA conference, I have been working with a Doctor of Education, who researches in the field of parental engagement, at a university in Brisbane, Australia. She asked for more details about the research, which I provided. She thanked me and said, 'I really appreciate it and will share your work with my colleagues... I look forward to keeping in touch'. I have agreed to share my thesis with her in due course.

[Impact on me as a school leader](#)

As a headteacher, the findings from this research have influenced my role and impacted upon my approach to working with parents. Being aware of how positive partnerships increases the chances of good outcomes influences decision making on a daily basis. One such decision is meeting with parents. This meeting is much more than parents (or school) sharing a concern; it is about being proactive and beginning to build a positive relationship from the earliest opportunity. For some parents, coming into school is a big step. I have benefitted from taking the time to gradually build positive relationships with parents. Making the time to have that initial discussion, as a school leader, is incredibly beneficial, as it is the first step of the early intervention process and provides an opening for additional meetings and support. It demonstrates to parents that they do matter and what they have to say is valued. The meeting also provides the opportunity to share with parents the difference an effective partnership will have on the progress of their child and ultimately the child's life chances. Parental partnership remains a key item on school improvement planning in many schools with a clear link to the impact on outcomes for children. In meetings beyond my school, I present improved parent partnership as a

possible solution to problems, for example, when reducing the need for alternative provision for pupils within the Local Authority.

Impact on children and their families

It would not have been possible to talk about the positive impact that parental partnership has on life chances for children, without a measurement tool that clarifies what constitutes effective parental partnership. This is a vital contribution to knowledge for school leaders and for parents. As a result of wanting to improve life chances for children, clear descriptors have been consistently implemented. The descriptors, shared with staff and parents, provide a clarity of expectation and a tool to identify gaps for school leaders. Consequently, parents and school leaders can then work together to make a difference for children. The descriptors provide a consistency of what an effective partnership between parents and the school looks like. The case studies demonstrate some of the positive outcomes from intervening with PGD. At the end of the summer term, one father (case study 2) said; "Thank you for taking the time to help us to be better parents to our girls, it really is appreciated".

Limitations

There are limitations to this research. Initially three schools were involved, however, ultimately the research relies on the database of two primary schools and the life chances research relates to only one school. The research has been small scale, nevertheless the correlations are clear. There are areas within this research that were simply touched upon and require investigation in depth, these will be presented as part of the recommendations.

Recommendations

The driving force behind my research was to improve educational outcomes and life chances for children within my school. This very quickly grew to wanting to make a difference for children nationally. Ultimately, I would like to change government policy for all schools, developing an expectation that parents play a key role in their child's education. It is important that parents understand what

working in partnership with their child's school looks like and how children should be 'school ready' on a daily basis. School leaders need to be supporting children and their parents at the earliest opportunity and this takes time and resources. If children of PGD can be identified as a vulnerable group (in the same way that pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant (PPG) are), leaders will then be able to plan effectively to overcome barriers and meet their needs. My recommendation is that the funding and expectations of school leaders mirrors that of those in receipt of the PPG: a vulnerability group strategy.

1. An amount of funding is allocated
2. Barriers to effective partnership are identified
3. A strategy is created
4. Needs focused intervention takes place
5. The impact of the intervention is monitored and reviewed
6. Leaders are held to account for improved partnerships and outcomes for children.

[Making a difference nationally](#)

In order for the 'vulnerable group strategy' to be successful, a national training programme should be implemented to share the importance of effective partnerships with parents. Part of this training should include how to use the PPDs as a risk assessment tool in order to identify vulnerable children. The training should also include a framework which will include; how to identify families, how to establish the beginnings of a working relationship with parents assessed as PGD and strategies for intervention based on individual needs. This training needs to reach beyond the world of education and should include, early help and intervention services, specialist services and Ofsted. Leaders will need to be trained and supported to deliver this message effectively, and parent partnership should form a key part of the teacher training programme. Accountability is also important and the effectiveness of parent partnership needs to be measured with leaders being held to account. I recommend that the engagement of parents with school forms part of the Ofsted framework.

In addition to a training programme for professionals, a framework needs to be established to educate and encourage parents to work in partnership with the school. Parents need to be asked to what level they want to engage with their child's education and improve life chances? This provides them with the opportunity to make an informed choice. This framework needs to begin with a consistent and non-negotiable induction programme for parents when children enter school. In order for this to be successful, school leaders need to promote an open-door policy where participation in their child's learning is expected and supported.

[Making a difference within my locality](#)

Change at a national level is a determined goal, however, my next step, at a local level, is to trial the parents in partnership programme with a new school. I plan to work in partnership with the Local Authority at a school which has been identified as needing to improve parental partnership. The plan is to work with teachers, staff and members of the early intervention team to create a strategy for the identified school. Teachers and support staff will be trained to apply the PPDs to their classes. In addition to training for school staff, I will be working with early intervention workers and school leaders to train them to have those initial difficult conversations. Leaders within the Local Authority will then be able to monitor the impact of this work and whether it impacts positively on life chances for children, including academic outcomes and referrals to specialist services. This findings from this piece of work will then inform wider issues for the Local Authority, for example, whether improving parent partnership can lead to a reduction in exclusions or reduce the need for pupils to attend alternative provision.

[Further research opportunities](#)

There are a number of opportunities to further develop this research, and these include:

- The inclusion of nursey school data. Applying the PPDs to children before they are of school age, could further improve life chances.

- The need for effective partnerships with parents who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- An in depth study of the nature of referrals to specialist services for pupils of PGD.
- The role of parent partnership with families from different minority ethnic groups.
- The impact of deprivation on parental attitudes towards education and how barriers can be overcome.
- A detailed analysis of the role of teachers in the development of an effective partnership.
- The training received by school staff in preparation for building strong partnerships with parents.

I recently made the important decision to leave the security of my profession in order to disseminate my research findings. I know that improved parental partnership will make a difference to the life chances of children and intend to share the findings through the publication of journal articles and will continue to present at professional conferences. I will continue to offer support to colleagues and provide the necessary documentation and processes to assist the implementation of the strategy across schools. Work has commenced with the two different Local Authorities to develop strategies for improving parental partnerships for schools and early intervention teams. I am in contact with university lecturers, to share the importance of effective teacher training in working with parents. I will be sharing my work with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, as it is imperative that parental partnership forms part of the Ofsted Inspection Framework. I look forward to the next stage of working in partnership with colleagues to increase the evidence base, which I will use to approach policy makers. With this evidence, I will make the final recommendation that children whose parents do not engage effectively with their child's learning or the school must be classed as a vulnerable group.

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03.03.2016

Professional Doctorate Ethical Approval Confirmation - CHAMBERS, Donna

Dear Donna

Thank you for submitting an ethical approval application for ProfD Documents 3, 4 and 5.

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has been approved.

Kind regards

Dawn James

Graduate School Administrator

Nottingham Trent University

Burton Street, Nottingham, NG1 4BU

"I declare that is research has been subject to ethical review and received ethical approval from the Nottingham Trent University Ethical Approval Committee on 3rd March 2016. I also declare that I have not deviated from the terms of the ethical approval issued by this committee."

26th September 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

I am currently studying for a Professional Doctorate in Education in an attempt to influence educational decisions beyond this school. In addition to lots of reading, I will be undertaking a research project into how school develops its relationship with parents and the difference this makes to the child's progress. During the next year or so I will be sending out a questionnaire, adding key questions to the Parent Parliament agenda and asking children what they have to say on the matter. I will also be inviting parents to come and meet with me to explore ways of improving our practice.

The study remains completely anonymous - Names will not be used they will simply be child a, b, c or parent a, b, c etc. I will be very happy to share the research with you and any findings at given points along the way. In addition to this, you have the option of 'withdrawing'. This means that if you do not want your child to be involved – they won't be. I will ensure that they are not part of any 'focus group' or discussion. This is likely to involve the pupil parliament – so if this applies to your child, they will not be involved in that particular meeting. If this applies to you please complete the attached slip below.

Alternatively, if you would like to meet with me to share your thoughts please do not hesitate to contact me either by phone as above or by email at (email address removed).

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Donna Chambers

Head Teacher

7th October 2017

Dear Colleagues

Further to our discussions and meetings, I would like to present details of my research.

I am currently studying for a Professional Doctorate in Education in an attempt to influence educational decisions beyond my own primary school setting. My research investigates how school develops its relationship with parents and the difference this makes to the child's progress. In addition to this, I will be doing considerable research into what happens to young people whose parents do not engage with school as they move into secondary school and beyond and this is where I would like your support.

I am interested in whether the young people in the different parental groups have an equality of opportunity as they move through secondary school. With this in mind, it would be productive to access the data on specific cohorts of children.

The focus would include:

- Whether social care intervention has been necessary;
- whether the young person has been missing education or needed educational support;
- whether the young person has needed support or intervention from the youth support services.

I am pleased that your data team have been able to support this research, which adheres to the BERA ethical guidelines. I received ethical clearance 3rd March 2016 from Nottingham Trent University.

The study remains completely anonymous - Names of the young people involved have been removed from the database, as has the cohort year. As I explained when we met, I will be very happy to share the research with you and any findings at given points along the way.

At the end of this letter, I have included a space for your signed approval that I can use this anonymous data as part of my research.

Many thanks for your tremendous time and support with this research, it is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Donna Chambers

I give my signed approval for the anonymous database to inform your research.

Signed copy held

..... Signed by _____

Position - Group Manager

Re: Professional Doctorate Ethical Approval Confirmation

Dear Donna

Thank you for submitting an ethical approval application.

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has been approved.

Student's Name CHAMBERS, Donna

Supervisor's Name Dr Helen Boulton/ Dr Andrew Clapham

NTU ID N0299698

Course Professional Doctorate – EdD

Committee Professional Doctorate Research Ethics

Committee (PDREC)

Date Approved by Committee 03 March 2016 and amended on 27 November 2017

Dawn James

Doctoral School Administrator

13th October 2017

Dear Partners

I am currently studying for a Professional Doctorate in Education in an attempt to influence educational decisions beyond my own primary school setting. My research investigates how school develops its relationship with parents and the difference this makes to the child's progress. In addition to this, I will be doing considerable research into what happens to young people whose parents do not engage with school as they move into secondary school and beyond and this is where I would like your support.

I am interested in whether the partnership that you have with parents, impacts on outcomes for the young people that you work with. With that in mind, I have enclosed a questionnaire, which I would be very grateful if you could complete and return within 10 working days.

The study remains completely anonymous - Names of the young people involved have been removed. This anonymity would also be relevant to your contribution. I will be very happy to share the research with you and any findings at given points along the way.

Alternatively, if you would like to meet with me to share your thoughts, or simply have a conversation about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me either by phone as above or by email.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this covering letter.

Yours sincerely

Donna Chambers

Appendix 6 – Earl Primary school database (Year 5 sample)

Yr	Anonymous	gen	SEN	PP	pg	file	file	Attendance	IDACI Rank
5	Child 205	M			A			96.15	22634
5	Child 225	M			A			97.44	15267
5	Child 232	M			A			100	18887
5	Child 233	F			A			98.72	15267
5	Child 240	M			A			98.72	15267
5	Child 249	F			A			97.44	15267
5	Child 206	F	SEND		B			87.82	22634
5	Child 207	F			B		con.c	100	18427
5	Child 208	F			B			95.19	817
5	Child 209	M	SEND		B	EHAF		100	22634
5	Child 212	M			B			96.15	18887
5	Child 214	M			B			98.08	18887
5	Child 216	M			B			97.44	22634
5	Child 219	F			B	EH	con.c	94.55	18427
5	Child 220	F	SEND		B			97.12	22634
5	Child 221	F			B		con.c	94.87	18427
5	Child 224	M			B			98.08	22634
5	Child 226	F		eFSM	B			100	9598
5	Child 227	M			B			100	13543
5	Child 229	F			B			94.87	14180
5	Child 230	M	SENDd		B			100	22634
5	Child 231	F			B			96.79	817
5	Child 234	M			B			92.95	9598
5	Child 235	M			B			100	19609
5	Child 236	M			B	EH		96.79	13543
5	Child 237	M			B			97.44	19694
5	Child 238	M			B			99.36	13543
5	Child 241	M			B			97.76	18427
5	Child 242	M			B			97.44	6560
5	Child 243	M	SENDd		B			100	18427

5	Child 245	M	SEND		B			100	18427
5	Child 246	F			B			97.12	18887
5	Child 247	F			B			96.15	9598
5	Child 248	F		FSM	B			99.36	18427
5	Child 202	F			C	con.c		97.44	6560
5	Child 203	F			C			94.87	18887
5	Child 204	F	SEND	FSM	C	EHAF		99.04	16355
5	Child 210	F			C		con.c	100	13543
5	Child 215	M	SEND		C			100	18427
5	Child 217	F			C			94.55	22634
5	Child 218	M			C		con.c	89.42	18427
5	Child 223	F		eFSM	C			98.4	18427
5	Child 228	F			C		con.c	97.44	21537
5	Child 239	M		eFSM	C	EH	con.c	94.23	18887
5	Child 244	F		SER	C			93.91	9598
5	Child 250	F			C			90.06	9598
5	Child 251	F			C			98.08	15267
5	Child 252	M			C			93.59	22634
5	Child 211	M	SEND	FSM	D		con.c	89.58	819
5	Child 213	M		FSM	D	EHAF	con.c	91.99	817
5	Child 222	M		PP+	D	EH	con.c	89.42	6560



The Partnership Factor!

My philosophy: If you want something to happen, understand it, make it high profile, ensure all involved believe in it, share the expectation and hold all involved to account.

“If you build it they will come”.

(The Field of Dreams 1989)

Donna Chambers

During today's session.....

- A 10 minute summary of a detailed research project into parental engagement and the impact on attainment and progress
- The impact of these findings and what I would like to achieve
- What this meant to us as a school
- Where we go from here

Donna Chambers



The Partnership Factor

Background Information

- Children could only be supported in times of a crisis if their parents consented for this to take place.
- This led to issues for me with reference to equality of opportunity
- Parental support, consent, partnership and the impact of this on progress and attainment.
- I blamed the parents - why would they not work with us? Then I found some answers.

Research Project at Master's Level

What is the impact of an 'effective parental engagement with the school' and are teachers equipped to ensure that parental partnership sits at the heart of their work with children and families?





The Partnership Factor

Two major findings:

- Teachers DO NOT leave university equipped to work in effective partnership with parents and families.
- When parents are involved effectively with the school progress IS accelerated!



The Partnership Factor

Two major findings:

- Teachers DO NOT leave university equipped to work in effective partnership with parents and families.
- When parents are involved effectively with the school progress IS accelerated!

- **Parent Group A** - These parents are regularly in school. They are actively involved in the life of the school, contribute to the events etc and always attend parents evening. They are regularly in contact through home/school diaries and the telephone and they work with their children at home.
- **Parent Group B** - These parents take part in the life of the school and will attend parents evening (usually) and may attend the carol concert but do not volunteer in school and are not always ringing up to question etc. But they do support with homework and use the home school diaries sometimes.
- **Parent Group C** - These parents are occasionally in school and will come into school for the odd parents evening and may come to gold book or the concert. They do not help at events and the only contact we may have with them is in the morning when they bring their child to school.
- **Parent Group D** - We never see these parents and they do not support with homework or write in the home/school diary. We have to chase up to come to parents evening.

Donna Chambers

Ask yourself the question...

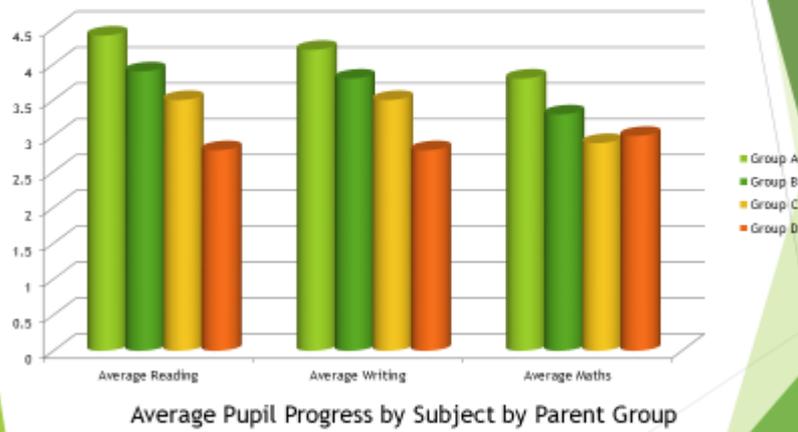


- ▶ How many of you 'pre-judge a parent the minute you meet them?
- ▶ How many of you 'Roll your eyes out loud' when a certain family is mentioned - Choose a family.....

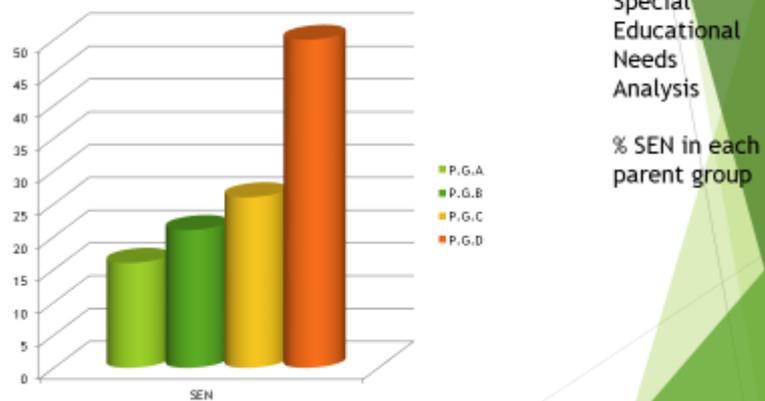
Donna Chambers



Pupil Progress (old levels 2012)



Percentage of children on the SEN register (2012)



Step 1 - Ensure all involved feel part of it

- ▶ Form a parent group 'The Hub'
- ▶ Welcome meetings
- ▶ Assessment and SATs meetings
- ▶ Workshops in all areas
- ▶ Parents attending lessons
- ▶ Structured conversations for all children
- ▶ **Attendance policy**
- ▶ Grandparent afternoons
- ▶ 'Date with Dads' club
- ▶ Parent friendly newsletter

- ▶ Parent Parliament - Big impact!

Donna Chambers



Step 2 - Strategic planning - making it high profile

- ▶ Target the groups for intervention
- ▶ Raise the expectation of parents
- ▶ Share the findings with the parents



Donna Chambers





Step 2 - Strategic planning - making it high profile

- ▶ Listening is critical - let them be heard
- ▶ Acknowledge factors which influence the partnership
- ▶ Use the EHAF to target families in need of support

Donna Chambers

Acknowledge: Family context



- ▶ Behaviour issues
- ▶ Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND)
- ▶ Domestic violence
- ▶ Risk of criminal activity
- ▶ Parental separation
- ▶ Emotional Issues
- ▶ **Attendance**
- ▶ Parenting capacity
- ▶ Drug/alcohol abuse
- ▶ And so the list goes on.....

Donna Chambers

More recent data...

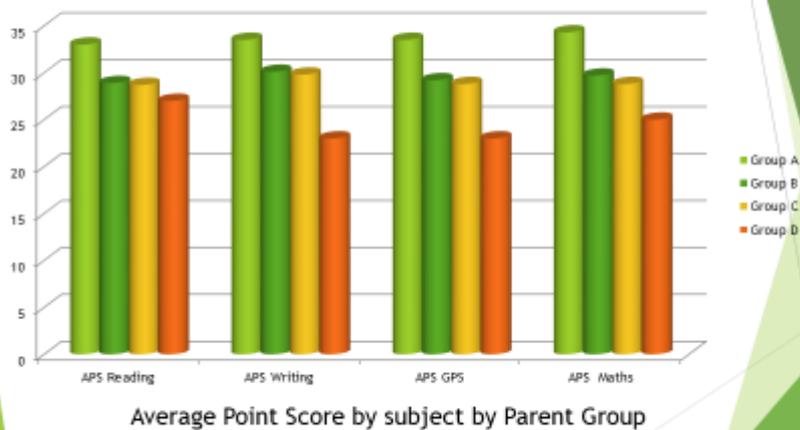
Point to note our number of Parent Group D have dropped from 12 - 15% down to 6% (and they are often new children to us)



Donna Chambers

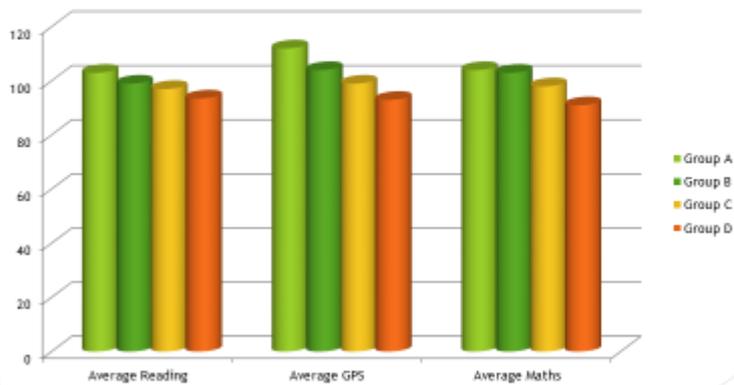


2015 (old levels)





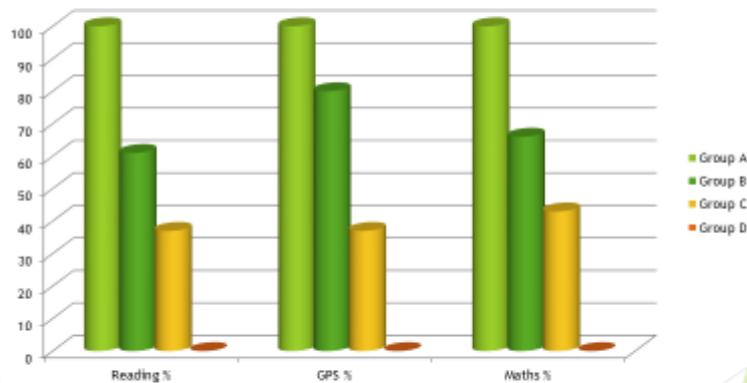
Scaled Score (2016)



Scaled score by Subject by Parent Group



Percentage at Expected Standard (2016)



Achieving expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2 by Subject by Parent Group

Academic achievement is important but what about... Life chances?

Engaging parents in school when the children are young - does it make a difference to what happens to them in later life?

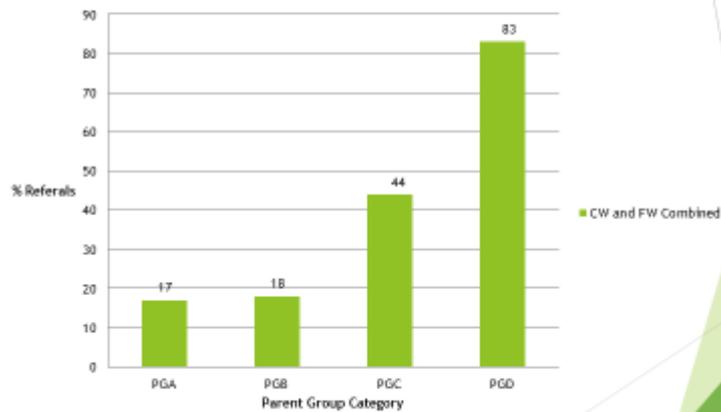
For me it is much more than progress and attainment, what happens next?

Donna Chambers



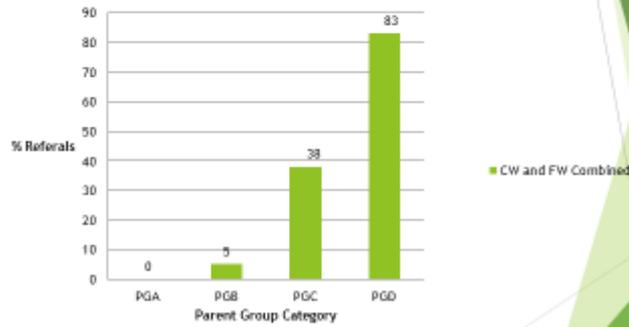
What happens when these children move onto secondary school?

Careworks and Framework
Cohort 1



What happens when these children move onto secondary school?

Careworks and Framework
Cohort 2



Clarity of Parental Group Descriptors

- Look at your children and categorise them
- How many PGD parents could you change with just the slightest bit of additional input?
- Do you make it difficult for these parents to engage with school and their child's learning?

Donna Chambers



The evidence suggests that PGD children should be classed as a vulnerable group and their parents considered a target group for change.

I would like to influence policy nationally, when my research is complete. And what you have done today will contribute towards that. Thank you

“If you build it they will come”.

(The Field of Dreams 1989)

Donna Chambers

Appendix 8 – Sample of database (Year 5, 2011 – 2012)

Pupil	Year	parent	Gen	Group	FSM	%	P.code	Level	APS
	Group	Group				Att	IDACI	R	R
186	5	A	F			98.6	20398	29	4
198	5	A	M			97.8	25863	29	4
204	5	A	M			96.5	19949	25	2
207	5	A	M	SEN		87.8	24832	27	2
163	5	B	F			99.5	20319	29	4
164	5	B	M			92.1	20319	27	2
165	5	B	M			96.5	20319	25	4
167	5	B	M			94.3	24471	29	4
168	5	B	F	G&T		97.8	25863	29	4
169	5	B	F	G&T		100	20319	31	6
170	5	B	M	SEN		86.4	20398	31	6
171	5	B	F			93.5	20319	25	2
172	5	B	F	G&T		99.2	24832	31	4
173	5	B	F			98.6	18468	31	6
174	5	B	F			99.7	24832	27	2
176	5	B	F			91	14372	29	4
177	5	B	M			88.3	20319	25	0
180	5	B	F			97.8	24832	29	4
181	5	B	M	G&T		97.3	11359	25	2
184	5	B	M			94.6	11359	27	2
188	5	B	M			95.1	20319	27	2
190	5	B	M	SEN		92.4	5724	19	4
192	5	B	F			97.8	20319	29	4
193	5	B	F			96.2	24832	27	4
197	5	B	M			96.2	20319	27	4
199	5	B	F		FSM	93.2	5192	23	2
202	5	B	F			88.6	12963	25	4
203	5	B	F			95.7	30215	23	4
205	5	B	M			89.1	15687	27	4
206	5	B	F			95.4	25863	31	6
166	5	C	M			95.9	24832	23	4
175	5	C	F			100	14372	29	4

178	5	C	F	SEN	FSM	95.9	30215	19	2
182	5	C	M		FSM	96.5	14372	21	4
183	5	C	M	SEN		93.8	20319	13	0
185	5	C	M			100	25863	29	4
187	5	C	M			99.2	16118	29	4
189	5	C	M	SEN	FSM	94.6	24471	23	4
191	5	C	F			94	24832	27	2
194	5	C	M			94.6	14372	29	4
195	5	C	M			100	20319	25	2
196	5	C	M			96.2	24471	23	4
200	5	C	M			75.8	24471	25	2
208	5	C	M			98.9	25863	25	4
179	5	D	M	SEN		97.8	20398	17	4
201	5	D	F			99.7	19949	23	2

Dear

Many thanks for volunteering to be interviewed as part of this project. My research has been cleared by the “**Professional Doctorate Ethical Approval committee**”.

"I declare that is research has been subject to ethical review and received ethical approval from the Nottingham Trent University Ethical Approval Committee on 3rd March 2016. I also declare that I have not deviated from the terms of the ethical approval issued by this committee."

Part of this process is to inform you that you can withdraw at any point. The interviews will be recorded, and during the interview if you say anything that you do not want me to use, you simply say so and I then cannot use it.

I am really looking forward to getting going with this and listening to your thoughts and views.

Thanks again for your contribution, ultimately I would like to improve life chances for all children and you taking part will make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Donna Chambers

Y3 Boy - PGD

School readiness
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely
Your child is always in the correct uniform
Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
Your child's homework is always complete and on time
Your child reads regularly at home
Your child practices spellings at home
Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
You attended parents evening
Further encouragement to support your child's learning would make a difference

Y3 Boy - PGA

School readiness
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely
Your child is always in the correct uniform
Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
Your child's homework is always complete and on time
Your child reads regularly at home
Your child practices spellings at home
Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
You attended parents evening
Thank you for your support it is making a massive difference to your child.

Parental interview – Master

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it. Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

Xx

Does it match with our grading?

Xx

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Xxx

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Xxx

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

Xxx

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Xxx

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Xxx

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

Xxx

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Xxx

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Xxx

PARENT 1

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself? Does it match with our grading?

I would put myself between B and C and yes it would match with us

Why between the 2?

Just because I was relevant to some things in the B and some things in the C – so I sort of thought a mixture of the 2.

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Oh yes – yes I do I think it is common sense, before hearing about this, I would have assumed that it would happen anyway. So I already thought that something like that was in place. I wouldn't know how and why and what you do and as far as I am concerned, I don't need to know that. The whys and wherefores, I just assumed that teachers already sort of rate the relationship between a school teacher and a parent anyway. So it is something that I would already think is there.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Erm. No I understand it, because obviously the parent group D are not getting the support from the parents and wider family, grandparents, uncles or

whatever, the wider family, so yes I can see why that group is targeted for more help. Yes I would think that everybody would deserved some sort of intervention somewhere if needed but obviously there is more structure there for the A,B,C bracket anyway so as long as conversation are still being had with parents in all groups, obviously there is going to be more attention needed on the D families, just because. It is common sense; they are going to need more structure.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

No... No I could be better definitely; I try but patience level for me. *Oh really.* I am not a natural teacher (laughs) Try and do reading as much as we can but my child is not that keen at the minute, so it is thinking of ways to get him to read, like a little torch light and I try things like that. Homework we do it and everything and tray and make it fair, but my patience levels, I know that it hits the top and has to come back down, so yes I could be better with my patience.

Does the school do enough to support you with the partnership?

So far so good – only in Early Years, Child has only been here since September and so far, there have been no issues, touch wood! I always think, I am wary of taking up too much teacher's time. I know they are really busy so I am wary not to sort of stand chatting for too long and quick to get out of their faces as much as I can because I don't want to take their time. But as it stands at the minute I have not had any reason too. Child is happy that is the main thing for me, since September, he could write his name and now he is writing sentences. So I can see that I have got no reason to say, why is he not doing this, why is he not doing that. Erm and he is happy so I have no reason.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers? What do you think this will be like?

Mmmmmmm I would guess so because the different personalities, Child is obviously going to change because he is only 5 now, erm so I am guessing that as he gets a bit older his personality may change slight, erm and teachers are different, so I am guessing that probably down the line it will – probably at secondary school.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

(see above)

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Oh yes – definitely. Yes

Is there anything else you would like to say?

The actual structure?

Anything

Child has only just started and I assumed it was in place – it could be made clearer to new parents. I presume that most parents would think that anyway – it could go in the starter pack thing that you get, just something in there so that it is clear.

I can't think of anything else.

Thank you

PARENT 2

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself? Does it match with our grading?

Think I might be an QA but I don't like the idea of being an interfering parents, I wouldn't want to be.

It is best fit – you don't need to be seen as interfering

I think that school would match with my grading.

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

When I first read about the grading system, I wasn't concerned about it at all and I understood the reasons for why you were doing it.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

I know why you target parents because I stand in the playground and I see things and I hear things. I hear mums swearing or slapping their child around the head and I'm not saying that they are parent group D but I do know that they probably need some support and they do things differently to how I would do it. I understand that some need intervention.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

Not all of the time, not some days. I do try and read, he is just 5 and I do try and do some writing with him. Dad reads some days and I have really seen progress since he started school so I have no concerns.

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Yes it does, I have no concerns at the moment

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

I don't know because he is in early years, I would come and tell you if I thought I wasn't getting enough information about his schooling.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

As above

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Absolutely

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No obviously my two are very young (youngest in nursery) and I can see a difference in mine, not to say that everybody has got to be a full time mum, but I have had conversations with my friends who work full time and they just can't manage everything. I find it hard as a stay at home mum but they find it even harder and I try to help like listening to them read or doing their washing or ironing so that they get time with their children, but I can see a difference with mine – not that I am comparing but I can see a difference.

PARENT 3

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself? For me I would say a B – Dad would say A, he thinks A but I say B

Why is that then?

Well he thinks we are more involved than I do – you always put yourself down don't you.

Does it match with our grading?

I'd like to think so, both then we have done some things at home, like we have grown some bulbs and brought them in and they need looking after and then we looked at each other and laughed and said "Well that makes us an A"

I deliberately don't look because I don't want it to influence this meeting, but I would say probably an A – you need a pat on the back

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes – I don't have any problem with it.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yes

Do you think it's fair or do you think, what about us?

No, I think it's fair, you know who is who, who does what and who doesn't and I think you have to 'pull up' the ones that don't.

**Pause in the tape recording for a part of the conversation, which is not to be used

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

Possibly not because I think you can always do better, I don't think it's necessarily on my part it's how much she takes part.

Tell me about that

She don't listen (laughter) she came home with homework the other day, it was difficult so I tried to help her but she was not interested at all. She said "you don't know what you are doing" and I was like yes I can, look I can do that. So she came to school and I told Mr F and she came how from school and said "I can do it now" and I said was it like I told you and she said "yes" and I said I thought so! So I don't think it is always necessarily us, it can sometimes be what they want.

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

For me yes at my level, yes and I do know that if there is something I can come to you or somebody else and it gets solved as well – even though you speak too fast.

Email is good because you can't always get in and sometimes you don't want them to know that you are doing it, so email is good as well.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Child now in Year 3

No – not unless there is something that goes off and sometimes you need more from that teacher, but nothing has gone off to say that I need more or less. It's been the same yes.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

Yes – she used to be willing but now she is getting older it is harder. She likes to do her homework and she is interested and as soon as she comes home from school with it, it is done, but if she can't do it she won't listen to us. In her eyes we don't know it. When she was younger she would listen.

Do you think that is going to continue to be more of a challenge?

Probably yes – that's just her!

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Yes

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No

Is there anything that we could be doing better?

For me at the moment no, because everything is working as it should be and she is happy, touch wood. So no at the moment everything is fine

PARENT 4

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

Laughs then probably B to C erm – daughter Year 1

Just because yesh I think it is just because, before that meeting I would probably have thought that I was an A but having gone to the meeting and knowing how the groups work so yeah I don't think we are an A just because, we always do the homework, we always do the reading it's just that well getting involved in the other stuff. We always come to the fairs and all the other things, parents evening, but nothing that little bit extra.

Does it match with our grading?

Well yeah, if it goes on those grading then yes – If the teacher does it accurately. Yes I hope so.

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes – Very much so. From child starting school and from my professional background (social care) it just makes so much difference. Every day when child gets in from school, the first question is; have you had a good day at school? What have you done? And I just think it is so important for her to feel that we are behind her at school and included in everything that happens at

school because if she doesn't see us being interested and included then why is she going to want to be.

Absolutely, that has given me goosebumps

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yes because like you showed us with the graphs and everything how bad it can go if the parents aren't engaging and aren't giving as much as they could erm why wouldn't you? Why wouldn't you get them involved to help their children. So Yes

I was a bit concerned perhaps that people think that it is not fair

Well they probably do see you more but if we as parents in the higher grades wanted to speak to you then we could, that is the whole point of it

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

Erm, some weeks no, but that can't be helped because that is just life isn't it. It gets to the end of the week and I think Oh God we haven't read enough as we should or especially with them being younger, I suppose as they get older they need to take a bit of the responsibility for themselves but she is only 5 so she needs us to say you need to do this and you need to do that. But no not as much as we could. And obviously work as well, we had a message this morning about the next parent/carer meeting for the disco, that is always on a Wednesday when I work, just little things like that. I know that I could email or whatever and I understand that I can't so that, so I try to do other things.

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Yes – yes, I mean that there are plenty of options, email addresses, the diary erm I don't think I ever...well in early years I probably used to email a bit more but like you say, you hope that we will always get a response and I am sure that is the case. Yeah for myself a parent that gives the input that I give, I can't see anything else that you could be doing.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

This will be difficult for you to answer with your child being in Year 1.

I think there is a difference , only experienced 2, but going from Early Years to Year 1, obviously there is more staff around in Early Years so say if, I mean the TAs in there, I cannot praise them enough. They are on the ball, they know everything, you ask them something and there is never yeah I just found them brilliant, so yes, I think, well if the teacher was busy you know that the TA could answer, whereas now there is only 1 TA and yeah I don't know. Whether it is just the different personalities of the teachers – I don't know.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

I would like to think not – as I said before, as she gets older, it will be more her responsibility but no I hope not, I hope I don't' turn into one of them parents that are a bit too much, but no I would like to.

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

100% yes

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Erm no I think I have said everything , just that I do agree with it and yeah it seems that those who don't agree well its probably about guilt sometimes because they know that they don't do as much, and it isn't big things it isn't , you don't ask us for too much. I work and dad works full time and he is away a lot of the time but we still manage, he is in London and I know that it is different for everyone and it is different but we try 100% to be everything that we can be and we would like to do more but yeah.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

Not the top one – B.

Does it match with our grading?

I would think so yes

Why not the top one?

Because I do not constantly Badger teachers

But it is best fit remember

No I would still say B, I don't, I'm not constantly chatting to the teacher

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes (hesitates) But I do think it needs to be a 2 way street and I do think there needs to be more interaction from the teachers. (Spoke of the teacher in question but didn't want it to be included)

Tell me what that could look like

Regarding interaction? *yes*

Well with regards homework, pointers tips – with regards to spelling and also the process that you use within a class to teach our children – the systems and structures. From when we was children when we were at school everything has completely changed. The way they put two letters together to make a

sound and things like that, we haven't got a clue. I haven't got a clue. It is completely alien to me.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yes, yes.

Do you think there is any unfairness in that?

It can be unfair if you don't know the specific circumstances of home life. I do think that yes that can be very unfair. My circumstances are; I don't have a mum and dad, my brother works he is a teacher so he can't get involved in child's school life, I don't have parents for them to get involved in school life. His dad, well his dad's parents - well his dad is really poorly in his mid 70's. So all there is his grandma, so from the child's point of view, all he has is a Grandma. Well now that's not going to go on for ever.

There had been some debate as I recall between you and your husband whether he was a B or a C

Yes – well I try obviously because I am a stay at home mum, I will volunteer to do whatever I can do and I will come to you know the library walk and the DH Lawrence, if I can do it I will do it. My health isn't great, I have had cancer, child has been through a lot in his little life so in some respects I think that child or me and his dad could be downgraded because child hasn't got the adult input from anyone else, other than us. So in those circumstances yes, I think it could be unfair.

(another conversation which shall not be used – with reference to the structured conversation)

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

Yes

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

I think that is very dependent on the teacher

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Yes – massively, child's first teacher was fabulous, you could talk to her about anything, and she was great. Teacher now is like – I don't want to be rude but it is like talking to a brick wall, there is no two way – she just randomly blurts

things out to you like this morning she just said "Did you have a nice holiday". I don't want her to ask me about my holiday, I want her to ask about the child, is there anything that he is struggling with or you know any issues regarding the child. Very nice of her to do that but everything just feels like it is forced. I do feel like it is forced and I also have a massive issue with when the children are lining up it can be quite unruly, like when the children are lining up waiting for the whistle to blow, I don't think that there is any authority in that line whatsoever. Also it needs to be noted that the nursery drop them off and then they go and that child's parent is not there to mind them and then it is left to other parents to say things.

That is interesting because they should physically hand the child to the teacher and the child because the responsibility of the teacher.

(another conversation which cannot be used about nursery dropping children off)

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

No I don't think so

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Yes – but like I say we need to be given the tools to do that

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

Children in Year 4 and Early years

- B – C for both children

Does it match with our grading?

Yes I think so - for early years it is hard to say because you are not that involved in school in the early years.

But for older children child yes – I think they would say the same.

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes I think it is good. Well if you have got a problem come to me do you know what I mean and that is what I would rather you come to me if you pick up a problem because I think that a parent might not necessarily see that problem. Even if they didn't see the problem, I think a lot of parents would, if they were made aware of the problem they would want to do something about it. I've got no problem. I think I do as much as I can yes, there is probably always room to do a bit more, but I think that we do as much as we can as a family.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yes, I think that those parents might not realise that there is a problem but want the best for their children so if you told them and also it might be that they didn't realise there was a problem. At your meeting you did say it could be other things that are happening out of school that they didn't realise was having an impact in school. So yeah, I would have thought anybody who didn't agree with it would be a parent that didn't want change basically or thought that they were right from the beginning.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

Reading probably not, because it is a bit of a battle with my child in year 4, erm but we always take part in as much as we can we come to parents evening and events, we come to afterschool clubs and his dad did 'dad's club' in previous years, don't know if that is still on at the moment.

I think so yes

So yes he has done dad's club and things, so yes we do many things. Reading is a downfall but I just need to think about that to be honest, homework we always do, spellings we always do but reading we don't always sit with them and do but I do know that he is reading but we don't always sit and listen.

The answer to that is to simply ask questions rather than simply reading.

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Yes I think so yes, I have never had any problems with any of my children and I have never necessarily needed loads of extra support but I have got a child coming through early years who has got a speech problem, I don't know where we are going to go with that (it's parents' evening tonight), I need to talk to the teacher because I don't know if there are any other special needs there as well. Yeah I think we will yes.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Yes – definitely, we have had teachers in the past where, don't get me wrong, they have always been good teachers but you can tell a difference, we have had some newly qualified teachers teacher my children, and we have got one this year who seems to be absolutely amazing, you wouldn't know that she was newly qualified. I think for me picking up a NQT always been at parents evening you just sit down and it's like, they are not saying anything to you. But the teacher I have got at the minute and with the more experienced teachers,

there is always a bit more of a relationship because I think that they know how to deal with it.

(Shared some information about research into NQT)

When child was in Year 1 I wasn't impressed with that NQT but you didn't keep her here for long!

Personality is still an issues, experience helps because you have seen a lot of children go through the school so you can pick things up, you know what I means, whereas if you are newly qualified you might not.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

With reference to year 4 boy. No I don't think any of his teachers have given me reason to complain and the way that he has been at school, I don't think anything has changed. He is involved in the school football team now which he absolutely loves and that means my husband comes and it's everything to him. But then we will let him read football related things or he can write a story about football, that's what he is interested in. He is so proud of himself on the pitch.

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Yes if we have got some input in it definitely. I think this will especially be the case with my early years child, we are going to need to be involved a lot more in his education. I don't know, I will need advice really from the school when we come to parents evening about where we go forward with a child if he has got special educational learning needs. I think we are going to have to be involved.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No I think I have said it all.

PARENT 7

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

I'd like to pick B but I would probably be a C.

Tell me why

Because as a parent you like to say "yeah I want to get involved and help out here and there", but it's infrequent and we share it, myself and my wife. There are sometimes when I am thinking, oh I've got to do the homework and he's saying "Oh we gotta do homework on a Sunday", but we kinda get it done but I wouldn't say that I'm "Come on let's do it " really enthusiastically, it's kind of "come on let's do this" (In a gloomy voice) because we would all prefer to do something else on a Sunday afternoon. But yes, I'd like to think of myself as a B because we are doing it, we think that it is important and we agree with you, we want to be more involved. The biggest thing for me is the rest of my life gets in the way.

Does it match with our grading?

I don't know, I think it might do if I went more C than B.

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes – I do. It's fascinating and I could talk about it perhaps as much as you could but no I won't.

No I want you to

The whole 'farory' around it, I'm not sort of on facebook with the other parents and to be honest when we had the meeting with all of the other parents and a few of them were still irate about it. It was like the whole thing passed me by. You explained how it happened and then they were irate about it and then you explained again how it happened and they were still irate about it. It was like well you have explained it and you know things like that happen, erm and you didn't intend for it to happen and we have always, always thought that you have the best interest of the children at heart and that is your primary driver, so we said well that's fine, it's not a problem. It was obviously a massive problem for you for a few weeks. But yeah it was like, why are we still talking about this?

(I clarified that I had not had a single complaint into school – which says it all really)

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

I think so yes. I think you have said it and I agree that unless, it's not just school either it is life really, unless we are positive about what you are trying to do, then it will rub off on the children and they will be negative about it. You know school's not cool, don't worry about it, I was rubbish at school and never got anything out of it, they'll go "Oh alright then, let's jack it in". but if we say look school is important, erm and what the teachers are doing is important, at least if we try and bring that home then at least they will have a positive attitude to learning, which I think is very important. I am all for us being as involved as we can be.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

If you want a simple yes no then I would say no. Because I do it from the parent side of things, you know we are the parents you are the teachers, we can't help it sometimes, we teacher them other stuff, but then I guess you do too and we try to do the same thing. We try to teach them to be good, honest and all those sorts of things. We don't have an agenda at home, we just hope that it rubs off and we hope that we are the kind of people that we want them to be. But it is not always the case.

(Spoke a bit about the bigger picture and the Gareth Malone project)

Perhaps the school could do more to consider the important 'family time' things that really make a difference for our children because they create experiences and that is only a good thing.

(Another conversation about things out of school) – children need experiences in order to access learning.

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Erm – I go yes. The only things that usually slightly annoy me is all of those meetings that are in the school day or 3 O’Clock. Do I take a half day off? Or do I feel guilty about not taking a half day off? The little things that I kind of dismiss because it’s not – you know situation means that I can’t do it. It’s like Grandparents’ day. On my wife’s side the 2 grandparents are so old and then one is really disabled and because my parents, I have only got the one left and she is 130 miles away in a different county. So it’s like when you do that and you go oh you know. Do I need to make more of an effort or is it just too much. Because it would be good for them to have that experience of having someone that they don’t see that often in that environment. And then the evenings with me – I made an effort to attend that meeting but you did organise it after 6 or 7 O’Clock.

(Explanation about timings for events – ie 2.30 on a Friday and adopt a grandparent for the events)

I will always attend a gold book and go in late.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Senior school?

Talk to me about both

Primary school – it’s 1 teacher and 1 teaching assistant and maybe another teacher for example where they target group in Year 6, we don’t see the other teacher we just see his class teacher so it’s 1 person and I was really chuffed because with the first son it was the same teacher and she took him and we like her and she seems to bring out the best for our boys. Then when the second son had her in year 5 and then she carried him through to year 6 we thought Yes we are happy with that. So it’s not so much on the academic side of things, but just as a person and how they teach and how they are with our boys, that was perfect for me. But of course now with the older boy at secondary school he reels off a list of teachers and I think who is that? We have met them all at various parents’ evenings but of course, I don’t know if

they actually have but they appear to have a kind of fast turn around of teachers. He had a science teacher for a while and she is gone now and I don't even know who the new one is. I've forgotten who it is now. He has a tutor and I quite like the fact that they have vertically groups tutor groups. I quite like that. Certainly, with the rest of his teachers, I am not sure who teaches him what.

(Discussion about the rolling year groups and personal tutor lessons)

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

Definitely, it might be that the eldest son is a special case; we don't even know that he has got homework. He just comes in and he does it. I suspect that the younger boy will not be the same, but yes I get the feeling that I might need to be more involved with him. The elders will say now I have got this, this and this and I have done it.

Clarification that this is not about the staff or you but about the attitude to learning is what you are saying because you can see that with your two boys. You are no different, the staff and no different but you see the difference between 2 different children.

Yes will oldest child if he has homework he will just do it; I'm not sure that learning wise, it's just something that is in the way and he has completed it. He must be learning because they are saying how he is progressing, but you just wonder with the child who struggles more, more of an effort and spends more time on it is that better than the child who has done it in 5 minutes and it's in the pile to hand back.

(explanation of how some parents are very different with their children)

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Yes, yes, because they spend as much time with us as they do with you, so if we have a different attitude to their learning, then they are either going to be one way or the other or they are just going to be confused about it. So if one side is saying this is really important and the other side are not, then who are they going to go with.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No, no, I have really enjoyed it actually.

Ah bless you

But yeah, no ... I do a tiny bit of teaching myself with adults, martial arts and I know a few teachers so I have been very fascinated with the whole, How you approach teaching, both from a sort of wanting to teach children, to the whole kind of administrative aspect. These teachers tell me all about you know the 3 part lesson, mini-plenaries and objectives and you do the WALT and the WILF and the WAGOLS and it's just fascinating how you administer the teaching. But at the end of the day, its like the passion that you have to teach children is to be admired and that's why I think this is such an excellent idea because I don't want to diminish that. I want to assist that. There will be some teachers who are just like you know, in any walk of life, but if you are really passionate about this, the least I can do is to aid that.

Thank you

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

I would grade myself in the B category. Erm you know looking at the categories to me, when it all came out we were on holiday (*when it hit the press?*) Yes when it hit the world wide web as such, erm and we was like – yes this is really good, we was really positive about it, even though we had erm parents evening last week we was going to ask teacher about it but we completely forgot and then we thought to be honest we don't care – because it is more about what we do for child and how child is coming on than we are doing ok. Because to us we are not we are not on trial on that respect. A lot of people might think oh it's wrong but its not.

Does it match with our grading?

I don't know because I don't know what you think, but, according to the write ups yes I would sort of say that is where we are.

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes – yes fully. Erm, it doesn't bother us like I was saying, I think it is more about bothering the people who are in the lower grading and thinking oh we are a bit crap or anything like that and it's not it's the school recognising it and to me what can they do to help you to, not necessarily to get you up the scale

but to help you get your child up the scale to maximise their potential in the school.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yes, erm the way that I look at it to get that partnership in relation to, if the parents aren't or if the children aren't doing very well, is there something at home? Be it a split up or anything like that or it might be that the parents don't fully understand. ERm last night child came home and she was on about, erm I forget what it was called something in how she broke her words down and I was like (pulls a face) she said shall I explain it to you and I said go on then. She explained and then said do you understand? And I was like – not really! (laughs). Erm but you know I get the jist of it but its things like that. If the kids don't understand themselves adthey go home and ask the parents and they don't understand at least by having this grading or having this communication with the school is that they can say "Donna I really don't know what this is – what is it" and it's like you say, if one of your staff can help pointing them in the right direction, so that they get the best out of the kids, which is ultimately what everybody wants.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

No – erm I think we do enough to a certain extent, but I always feel that I haven't got enough or as much time as I would like to, but what I try and do because of the background that I have had in training with adults and things like that I look at the different types of learning. So she will get quite a lot of the different learning s here and when I get home – the project is at the moment a boat, they have got to build a boat at the moment. I thought I could quite easily get a bottle out of the garage and I know it's going float, it's a nice big bottle but I thought no. I got the bottle, I got a fork, I got all sorts of things, I got a bowl and I said let's have a look at which is going to be best. The ones that were floating I then said lets push them down and I tried to get more of a kinaesthetic learning, you see the visual side. So try and push it down, put something on top and try to push it down. I try and get her involved. I could quite easily say "Oh this one will be best" I really want her to do that and if I had got more time, I would be able to do more things like that – which I don't. On that side we are very fortunate because if I don't pick her up (and I can work from home anytime that I want), If I don't pick her up then its either my wife or my in-laws. When child gets home, she likes to play teachers and as kids generally do and granddad is a bit more pushy and he likes to do loads of things with her so she doesn't miss out, but on a personal basis...

My parents did a phenomenal amount with my children because I worked full time

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

I have not had any dealings with it really in that respect, I have not had to come in and say – how do I do this or can we do that, so I can't really answer that. Erm the only thing really is this week we got the spellings and the sentences to add a certain word and one of the sentences didn't fit – it was make instead of made. Also at this time a letter came home and the dates were wrong – some might then say that communication could be better – but that's all. If the school can't get it right? I am sure that if I needed it we would get the help and support that we needed.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Erm no not that I have noticed. Both wife and I when we pick child up its more about has she fell over – no issues or anything. Be it us or grandparents. No issues it's fine.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

Erm I would hope that this wouldn't change purely because what we have had from foundation to now has been there should we need it. Communication is absolutely fantastic, I don't know if it has been said yet but child came home and said when I go up to next year I have got such and such a teacher and I thought "How does she know what?" *she doesn't*

Do you know that teacher? She lacks confidence in herself if we say take her to soft play if she doesn't know her way around she will be step back and gradually go in but when she spoke about the teacher she was fine.

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Yes – erm you know just what people do at home and anything that the school can do, not necessarily to give the parents to help, but encourage them. I am a big believer in that. Whenever I have done training courses at work in the different jobs , I try and make them as fun and engaging as you can. One of the hardest courses that I ever taught was suicide awareness, but you had to try and make it as enjoyable as possible, even though you are dealing with that sort of thing and the interest that we have had from the teachers you know,

the first impression greeting the children or letting them go, you can see the smiles on the kids faces and if they are enjoying it then they are going to learn.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No I am really happy with everything that has happened on a personal basis for child, she is ahead of where she should be as well which is even better. Going back to the question about am I doing enough? And I say no but she is ahead of where she should be so I think well it's a balance.

PARENT 9 (girl y3)

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

Any questions before we begin?

Where do you grade yourself?

Erm I'd say B - C, because some weeks I am more B than C but some weeks because I work as well you can't be as engaged as you would like to be at home

Does it match with our grading?

I don't know actually, I think you might grade me lower (both laugh)

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

I do because I think actually I would want to know if a child was struggling, because at the end of the day it is what has happened in these early years that makes a difference for the rest of their career. We do quite a lot at home but we make it fun, she has got this book that she is into reading about bones so I would like to know if she was struggling because then I could put things into place to help her at home so that it just wasn't at school. Because at the end of

the day she is here what? From 9 – 3.15 so actually she is at home as well, so I have got to make it fun so it's not just all on you guys.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yeah because at the end of the day the child has not got a choice and that child is going to be potentially behind and obviously if they are behind in primary school they are going to be even further behind when they get to secondary school. They need to be able to get into employment and they are going to be the ones who don't who go onto commit crime and not invest in society if you like.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

I do but I always think there is an element for improvement erm, 'cause like reading, we do read erm but I like to read every night but you know when she is tired, you just think actually, we will let that one go. I've always loved reading to her, but you know when you get back and you have got work to do and that's one of the things I don't like about my job, when you are tired and you have got that much to do, so when we are just having that cuddle and to read. One thing I have found it that she had a cabin bed and that does not help the situation...

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Yes, because eif ever I have had an issue I have got in contact and given me clues, like last year with her handwriting , you said try this so I got a book and I do playdough and you mentioned about doing that cornflour and do writing with that and slime. That all helped her strength, now this year her handwriting has come on so much. She is writing independently at home and I was like – look at your beautiful handwriting. She was like "Do you think it is" and I was like it's beautiful. She was just doing it, off in the other room, just writing. I thought that was really good and we are sort of keeping a diary log, so she is practising her writing but it is sort of fun at the same time because she is writing what she wants to write. She is getting more confident at doing the 'conjoining' words as she calls them. (laughs) She is like writing new words and I was like woa! All htat has helped with the maths homework as well, because obviously when I went to school (laughs) erm we didn't do to the way you do it now, but actually when I get my head round it is actually easier. Now I have got it, I have got it, but it took a while. She said I am putting one on the doorstep and I said what's the doorstep?

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Yes – erm Y1 that teacher was very distant, even when the children were like saying hello I have brought this, she didn't engage at all. I don't know if that was she was young or what, but literally it was very difficult to get anything back. The one we had last year was absolutely fantastic, any issues sorted with the support teachers. This year again it has been ok, there was one or two occasions where questions were not answered but I asked again and he though the had already answered. He had actually read it – but then I do that all of the time. When I think I have answered it in my head but not actually sent a reply.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

WE did go through an independent stage with her learning, where like if she was stuck on a word, I would try to help and she was like No don't tell me and I'm like that is my job and she's like No I need to break it down and she is getting more assertive and she is doing quite a lot of self-directed learning now. She is sort of looking for things that she is interested in. I'm like, I wouldn't have had a clue at that age. It is quite impressive. Like this morning, we were ready super fast and we have got like this human body book, so we were going through it looking at the wind pipe and oesophagus - she couldn't say it so I said Am I allowed to tell you then I took a drink of tea and it went down the wrong hole and she said do you not have an epiglottis? I was like yes I do! (laughs)

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

I think so because without it, I wouldn't be able to support her with her homework, because you do it different and actually giving us the links on the web page as well – like this week with the youtube page, I wouldn't actually have thought about going on the youtube page. Obviously now with the new generation of learning that is what we tend to be doing more and more.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

No just thank you. Literally I have seen her thriving in confidence and everything over the years. She has gone from like this little shy thing and now she has sort of come out of herself and has a character.

Bless you and thank you so much

Codes	Responses aligning with the code	other
Starting codes		
Relationship with teachers - does it vary from one class to the next?	<p><i>"I do not constantly badger the teachers" P5</i></p> <p><i>Does it differ? "I would guess so because of the different personalities." P1</i></p> <p><i>"Whether it is just the different personalities of the teachers - I don't know." P4</i></p> <p><i>"I don't want to be rude but it's like talking to a brick wall, there is no two way." P5</i></p> <p><i>"Everything just feels like it is forced." P5</i></p> <p><i>"Personality is an issue, experience helps." P6</i></p> <p><i>"So it's not on the academic side of things, but just as a person and how they teach and how they are with our boys, that was perfect for me." P7</i></p> <p><i>"Erm not that I have noticed." P8</i></p> <p><i>"One teacher was very distant". P9</i></p> <p><i>"Every teacher I come across has been sound to be fair." P10</i></p>	
Time constraints for parents	<p><i>"The biggest thing for me is the rest of my life gets in the way" P7</i></p> <p><i>"Some weeks I am more B than C, some weeks I work as well, you can't be engaged as you would like to be." P9</i></p> <p><i>"When she is tired you think, we will let that one go." P9</i></p>	
Age of child	<p><i>As she gets older..."It will be more her responsibility." P4</i></p> <p><i>"She used to be willing but now she is getting older it is harder." P3</i></p> <p><i>"no I don't think so." P5</i></p> <p><i>"I don't think anything has change." P6</i></p> <p><i>"I get the feeling I might need to be more involved with him." P7</i></p> <p><i>"Erm I would hope that this wouldn't change." P8</i></p>	

<p>Role of the school</p>	<p><i>"I do think it needs to be a 2 way street and I do think there needs to be more interaction from the teachers." P5</i></p> <p><i>"I always think , I am wary of taking up too much teacher's time." P1</i></p> <p><i>"Child is happy that is the main thing for me." P1</i></p> <p><i>"Yes it does (enough) I have no concerns at the moment." P2</i></p> <p><i>"I do know that if there is something, I can come to you or somebody else and it gets solved as well" P3</i></p> <p><i>"Email is good because you can't always get in." P3</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, yes I mean that there are plenty of options." P4</i></p> <p><i>"Yeah for myself, a parent that gives the input that I give, I can't see anything else that you could be doing." P4</i></p> <p><i>"I think that it is very dependent on the teacher." P5</i></p> <p><i>"Yes I think so." P6</i></p> <p><i>"Erm, I go yes" P7</i></p>	
<p>Understanding of grading and targetting PGD</p>	<p><i>"Parent group D (children) are not getting the support from the parents and wider family.P1</i></p> <p><i>"Obviously there is going to be more attention needed on the D families." P1</i></p> <p><i>"You know who is who, who does what and who doesn't and I think you have to 'pull up' the ones that don't." P3</i></p> <p><i>"Why wouldn't you get involved to help their children?" "I think that those parents might not realise that their is a problem but want the best for their children." P6</i></p> <p><i>"If one of the staff can help pointing them in the right direction, so that they can get the best out of the kids, which is ultimately what everybody wants." P8</i></p> <p><i>"yeah because at the end of the day the child has not got a choice." P9</i></p> <p><i>"yes because obviously you want your child to do better." P10</i></p> <p><i>"I don't really grade myself..its just wanting the best for my children." P10</i></p>	

<p>Self-efficacy and do you do enough to support your child's learning?</p>	<p><i>"You always put yourself down don't you?" P3</i> <i>"I wouldn't want to be an interfering parent, I wouldn't want that" P2</i> <i>"I want to get involved and help out here and there, but it's infrequent" P7</i> <i>"We haven't got a clue. I haven't got a clue." P5</i> <i>"There is probably always room to do a bit more" P6</i> <i>"No I could be better definitely; I try but my patience levels for me...I could be better with my patience" P1</i> <i>"Not all of the time, not some days" P2</i> <i>"Possible not because I think you can always do better, I don't think it is necessarily on my part, it's how much she takes part." P3</i> <i>"Some weeks no, but that can't be helped because that is just life isn't it?" P4</i> <i>"Reading probably not, because it is a bit of a battle with my child...reading is a downfall but I just need to think about that to be honest." P6</i> <i>"We are the parents you are the teachers...we teach them other stuff...we teach them to be good and honest and all those sorts of things." P7</i> <i>"We hope that they are the kind of people that we want them to be." P7</i> <i>"but I always feel that I haven't got enough or as much time as I would like" P8</i> <i>"Do I need to make more of an effort? Or is it just too much?" P7</i> <i>"You can always do more." P10</i> <i>"I do but I always think there is an element for improvement." P9</i></p>	<p>Positive... "we don't care - because its is more about what we do for the child and how the child is coming on than are we doing ok."</p>
<p>Emerging codes</p>		

<p>Attitude towards the grading system</p>	<p><i>"It is common sense... I would have assumed that it would have happened anyway" P1</i> <i>"I just assumed that teachers already sort of rate the relationship between a school teacher and a parent anyway" P1</i> <i>"I wasn't concerned about it at all and I understood the reasons for why you were doing it."P2</i> <i>" I don't have any problems with it." P3</i> <i>"It makes such a difference...if she doesn't see us being interested and included then why is she going to want to be?" P4</i> <i>"It's fascinating and I could talk about it perhaps as much as you could!" P7</i> <i>"It's more about bothering the people who are in the lower grading and thinking 'oh we are crap'."P8</i></p>	
<p>Stereotyping of parents</p>	<p><i>"I see things and I hear things (in the playground). I hear mums swearing or slapping their child around the head and I'm not saying that they are parent group D but I do know that they probably need some support and they do things differently."P2</i></p>	
<p>Attitude of the child</p>	<p><i>she said you don't know what you are doing" and I was like yes I can, Look I can do that"P3</i> <i>"So I don't think it is always us necessarily us, it can sometimes be what they want."P3</i> <i>"I suppose as they get older they need to take a bit of the responsibility for themselves." P4</i> <i>"She is like no don't tell me...she is getting more assertive." P8</i> <i>"some children you know knuckle down, some children don't. But yeah I think their attitude does change slightly." P10</i></p>	

	<p>Weekly pieces sent:</p> <p>1 piece of English, including spellings and 1 piece of maths.</p> <p>A half termly research project is also set.</p>
<p>Spelling:</p> <p>Learning and Testing Arrangements</p>	<p>Weekly amount: 8 words set, linked to in class learning or key spelling list.</p> <p>Date set: Each Friday</p> <p>How sent home: In homework book</p> <p>Date tested: Each Friday</p> <p>Result communicated: Via homework book</p>
<p>Key Spelling List</p>	
<p>After School Clubs</p>	<p>Information about clubs will be shared via parent mail each half term. Children can express an interest by returning a slip to their class teacher. Confirmation letters will be sent if a place has been allocated. Clubs will run from the second, to the last week of each half term, unless otherwise stated.</p>
<p>Times Table Whizz</p>	<p>End of Year Expectation: Multiplication tables for 2s, 5s, 10s and 3s.</p> <p>Bronze award: Skip count multiplication table in order.</p> <p>Silver award: Recall multiplication table in order.</p> <p>Gold award: Answer multiplication table questions in any order.</p> <p>Children to inform teacher when ready to be tested for an award.</p>
<p>School and Class Rewards and Sanctions</p>	<p>If I try really hard:</p> <p>My name will go on the right side of the board and I will get a reward!</p> <p>If I break the school rules:</p> <p>Stage 1: I will get a warning</p> <p>Stage 2: My name will go on the wrong side of the board</p> <p>Stage 3: I will get a tick against my name and I will have to pay back time</p> <p>Stage 4: I will be sent to work in another room</p> <p>Stage 5: I will see the Head Teacher and my parents will be contacted</p> <p>Additional rewards and sanctions in Class 6:</p>
<p>Parental Engagement</p>	<p>Here are some ways you could support your child with school readiness.</p> <p>Ensure your child is in the correct uniform and arrives at school by 8.50am every morning. Read regularly at home, practise spellings and ensure homework is complete and on time.</p> <p>Attend parent events and evenings when possible.</p>
<p>Class Email Address</p>	

PARENT 10 (part of case study 1) (3 boys, Year 3, Year 2 and year Reception)

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know. This will continue after so if 2 weeks, 6 weeks or 6 months down the line you do not want to be part of it then that is fine.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

So the reason that you are a case study is historically we would have graded you as a parent group D, that isn't the case anymore, which is great and I guess for me, what's important is to hear about that journey.

I will start with asking the same question that I have asked everybody else but then we will talk more freely about what is different for you and why you have gone through the changes.

Where do you grade yourself?

Er. I don't know to be honest with you, I think I just try to do better for my children, erm it's not about, I don't think it is about grading myself, it's just doing what is best for my children, erm, with what happened in the past and you know `em saying that parents were going to be graded, it did kind of wake you up. Made you think, you know, you have got to try harder, you have got to do better. I think it is a good thing erm, as for grading myself I don't really grade myself, I just keep doing what I do and try to be the best that I can.

It's interesting and thank you for that it is really useful. It's interesting because we would grade you now as a B and I don't normally tell parents that (as part of the interview) but because you have come on such a journey, I will tell you

that. We can see the difference that is making to the learning for the children which is great.

Does it match with our grading?

(included in previous answer)

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

Yes I think it is a good thing. I think it is difficult depending on what backgrounds or what jobs different parents do, work and things like that can affect, but generally on the whole, It did wake a lot of people's ideas up and I think , you know, do more – try harder. I think it is good.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

Yes because obviously you want the children to you know do better and if they get more support at home from mum, dad, granddad, whoever, then it is going to help `em out so yeah! I think it is good.

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

You can always do more (this was an incredibly quick response)

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

Everybody can always do more.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

Erm on the whole no, there is a lot of teachers that I get along with. Every teacher that I come across is sound to be fair.

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

Oh yeah yes definitely.

Tell me about that

As they get older, especially as they get into teenage years, its part of growing up I suppose, some children you know knuckle down, some children don't. but yeah I think their attitude does change slightly erm

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

Yes

For you and your boys there was a time where I was a bit concerned about your engagement and we had a meeting. First of all (and please be as honest as you can) How did that feel to be asked to come into school and discuss it?

Er definitely hit home, kind of woke me ideas up, erm it wasn't a good feeling to be honest with you but, it was like a kick up the backside to say, you know wake up! So it's never good to be in a kind of place like that where you are being told you have got to do more to help your children. So it's not a good feeling erm so you know you gotta try harder.

Was there anything within that meeting that particularly worked or hit home?

(hesitates) it's not about the meeting or the grading, it was about doing more for your children. Erm you know you can kind of walk away from that and you then think to yourself bloody hell, I need to try harder for my children, because that is what it was all about at the end of the day. It's the children so erm I think it wakes people's ideas up!

Have you seen a difference with your boys since you have been doing more?

Yeah, definitely, I mean I read with 'em, we do writing. When I get to see 'em it can be a bit difficult, but yeah there is reading and writing, you can see an improvement. Erm he had a bronze and a silver award for his timestables, so you know there is definite progression there and so it is definitely working. But the thing is it doesn't happen over night, you know it is a progressive thing and it takes time, but as for progression yeah, definitely.

Is there anything we could have done differently or better with that (the meetings)?

Mmmm probably not, I think you handled it really well to be honest with you erm you came across nice, you wasn't like defensive or anything like that you was really good so, I don't really think that you could have handled that in a better way.

Anything else you would like to add or say?

(Long pause) Erm just keep trying harder and harder for my children

Ah bless you and thank you so much. Because for me, I have been really fortunate with the families that I have worked with, that they are all on board and we see that and the difference that it is making and we see the progress with your boys so erm thank you.

Anything else you can think of just let me know.

Can I just add one last thing?

Yes of course you can

From the start when my children started coming to this school, I always thought that you was an absolutely great teacher and I still think it now and you know you really put your heart and soul into the job and I think you are great so...

PARENT 11 (part of case study 2) (2 girls, Year 6 and Year 4)

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this process. If at anytime you wish to withdraw, please let me know. This will continue after so if 2 weeks, 6 weeks or 6 months down the line you do not want to be part of it then that is fine.

All information gathered will be anonymous – although I do need to you sign that the ethics of this research have been shared with you.

If you say anything that you do not want me to use – please say and I will not use it.

So the reason that you are a case study is historically we would have graded you as a parent group D, that isn't the case anymore, which is great and I guess for me, what's important is to hear about that journey.

I will start with asking the same question that I have asked everybody else but then we will talk more freely about what is different for you and why you have gone through the changes.

Where do you grade yourself?

M – B and a half

D – Can we do that?

A lot of people say B to C so that's fair.

Does it match with our grading?

D – I think you would be the best judge of that

M – Yeah I think that you would

Do you agree with our grading of the partnership?

D – I think that the grading is useful because it helps you to see where you can improve so yes if you mean agree in the sense of the grading then yes I whole heartedly agree. If you mean do I agree with what you grade us at erm, yes I would have to agree because you are the ones that know best, so you can be honest with us and we can take that on board, offended or otherwise. But, but, at least we can action it, so I would rather that you were telling use when things were not quite right or how we could Improve or however you wish to word it , so yes I would agree.

M – Yes definitely, I mean, we didn't realise before that things like coming to parents' evening and things like that had an impact, when we didn't know about the grading, erm and I think we have tried to make more of an effort to be... to be more around haven't we.

Do you understand the reasons for us targeting parents who find working with their children and the school a challenge?

This had already been answered in the above answer

Do you feel you do enough to support your child's learning?

M - I think that we could probably have them read to us more, it's something that we definitely don't do a lot of. I think that's because they love reading anyway and they are reading all of the time anyway and it's just finding the time and the peace to have them read erm with obviously the two little ones. It's tricky because everybody goes to bed at different times. And you need to have quiet when you are listening to someone read, it's just hard to break away from the rest of the family to do it.

D – It's difficult with the younger ones because they don't understand that we need to spend time with the older ones they want your attention all of the time. That is tricky. As mum said with the girls they read vociferously erm...

I am going to have to spell vociferously now (all laugh)

They devour books erm there was a period where I couldn't get my kindle because they were using it every night. I mean it's only because they ran out of books that I got it back to read my own books. But we also read to them every night so, part of the bedtime routine is always read books to all of the children and they are very good because they, as they have got older, they sometimes follow along, as you are reading it you might misread a word or inject a word that isn't there and they will pick you up on it, because that is what we do when they read to us, which is quite funny because it does mean that they are paying attention, not just zoning out, so they do, we know that

they listen, we know that they read a lot, when we do read with them, it is always a pleasure to hear them.

M – because we know that they are good at it, we don't worry about it too much really do we

D – no erm

M – we do occasionally say right, you need to read your school book

D – the only criticism that I have only really levelled at them with their reading is that they need to slow down a bit. Sometimes they read at, well there is different reading speeds isn't there. There is your internal reading speed, when you are reading to yourself and there is the reading speed when you are dictating to someone and that is usually a lot slower, otherwise it is difficult for other people to hear it. You need to put intonation and you need to breathe and pause at punctuation and that is the only real thing. They very rarely struggle on any of the words.

Does the school do enough to support the partnership?

I think so, I think you are very open with us about where we could improve and I appreciate that because sometimes it's not easy to see that as a parent, because if I think they are doing well, but you could turn around to me and say well actually they could be doing better and this is how you could achieve it and this is great.

M – I feel that the school communicates with us, you know you always tell us what you are doing, what the children are doing, I feel like the school does communicate well with parents.

If applicable, have you found that this varies from class to class, with different teachers?

M – I think they are fairly consistent aren't they

D – Yeah they have always been very open with us and honest about where the children are and what their strengths and weaknesses are and it's kind of reassuring because we know our children well, obviously and we know where their strengths and weaknesses lie from when they are trying to do their homework and that is confirmed by the teachers and makes you think that you are on track because you know that you have understood what they are saying and you have understood their difficulties. That is good. The only thing (dad then spoke at length about different ways of teaching maths (1 minute 54 seconds)

Does it change as the child moves up through the years?

D - Yes I think it does because you, certainly at the start you don't know what their strengths and weaknesses are, you have got an idea perhaps from how they interact and play at home but as they get older and you know where they are, I mean they are growing at school and you get to see that, erm, so I think it is more important in the early years to be hands on because you can do this more effectively. Once they are child's age, she knows that maths isn't her favourite subject, I don't think, with the best will in the world you are ever going to change that. But we know that that is the area that we have got to work on. With the child starting in September, I mean we don't know what she is going to be good or bad at.

Do you think that parental engagement in the learning process can make a difference for our children?

D – Definitely

M – Oh yes

For you and your girls there was a time where I was a bit concerned about your engagement and we had a meeting. First of all (and please be as honest as you can) How did that feel to be asked to come into school and discuss it? *(Explanation about why this is important to my study)*

D – It was worrying to start with

M- I was a little bit annoyed to start with, when was it we came in? (discussion about when this was)

M- I remember being annoyed because at the time we had so much on didn't we erm and I just thought this is just an extra hassle erm, I thought you were just going to give us (you know) a telling off. (All laugh) You need to read to, you need to have your children read more and you would give us loads of things to do but it wasn't like that at all. It was how can the school help you to be more involved and you showed us how the stats of people who were more involved and how better their children performed and you know, I can't remember all of the things that we talked about but it was quite insightful. So I was annoyed initially but then I could see what it was about.

Thank you for your honesty

D – I don't think I felt annoyed to start with because I get criticisms levelled all of the time at work and you have to sort of put your ego to one side all of the time and just take it as this is something is obviously wrong and we need to fix it, so it was more the worry of were the children performing well, were they in trouble, were they disruptive? So that was my initial take on it, erm, and I thought that we were doing quite a good job until you pointed out that there

was more that could be done, erm so I suppose I was a little surprised. I wouldn't go as far as to say I was offended or upset about it, I was just surprised that we weren't doing enough, because I thought that the girls were doing well, but you proved that they could do better and er that was actually very useful for us.

M – I think I thought that it was all based on the fact that I wasn't walking them to school and picking them up again and I thought I can't physically, its not feasible for picking up anyway because they are old enough to walk. It wasn't possible for me to walk and I guess that was what was irritating me because I thought they are going to make me walk to school and walk back again every day and I'll need to pick them up when they can walk on their own and I am needed elsewhere erm so yeah, that's what I thought it was all about but it wasn't about that really.

Was there anything within that meeting (you have already talked about the statistics) that particularly worked or hit home?

D – Yeah I think that the fact that you had all of this information, it wasn't just a 'come into the office, right now Mr and Mrs ..'

M – Yeah you are the only ones who..

D – Yeah

D – it was like here are the statistics on this and this it proves positive that you can make a good effect on your children's education and how can we help you which is again part of the surprise was like 'Oh right ok so its not so much a you can do better C+' it was a you know how can we help you to do better which was the surprising part of it.

M- Like rearranging parents' evening to a different day, moving times and stuff like that because the times we were given were always unsuitable, so I tended to just not come or speak to the teacher and say we can't do it and then it would just go by the wayside.

I explained the long 'to do' list that went to staff following the meetings.

Have you seen a difference with your girls since you have been doing more?

D – Definitely

M – Have you?

D – Yes, with child's maths, there was a time when she would really struggle with it and she's a bit like I was at school that if something is difficult and its

not interesting to her and down come the steel shutters and its like I won't understand this and that seems to have lifted somewhat, she still gets a bit stressed when she can't do something but with patience she knows that she can work through the problems and she does get to the right answer which is great.

M – But you were doing that before we got called in

D – But I have seen a difference. I think knowing that there is the support from the teachers, maybe made me calmer about doing it with her. So rather than getting to the point where we were (head in hands) 'Why can't you see' erm it was more, lets try another way. I think she is less erm uptight about things not going perfect, so when things don't go quite the way that they should she is less excitable about it now, she still gets upset and worried, but she can work through it so that is great so that's what has improved a lot from when we first saw you, that was what I was most concerned about, because writing I knew she already had a passion for and was less concerned about that, but because the maths, because she wasn't interested in maths, she didn't really see how it was beneficial to be good at maths, now she does a bit and it's good to see that attitude because it has made her more receptive to be, and the progress is good.

M – I can't say that I have noticed a difference in the girls erm, definitely coming to parents' evening they can see that we are interested to know what they are doing, but in terms of how they are, I haven't really noticed anything.

Is there anything we could have done differently or better with that (the meetings)?

M- Did you send us a letter?

My contact with parents with different families depended on the families so I can't remember whether I wrote to you or rang you, it depended on the family and what I felt would be best for that family.

M – I think it was a letter that we got erm and I think a phone call would have been better

D – there are few clues in a letter which is why emojis were created so that if somebody makes a comment you can't hear the intonation that has been said so and I would imagine that sending a letter with emojis in would not be quite up to the educational board's standard, so yes, perhaps a phone call is better.

M – You kind of feel that a letter is a bit official

D – You read it differently depending on your frame of mind

Clarification that mum had assumed that she would have to walk the girls to school perhaps an understanding of context would have helped.

Anything else you would like to add or say?

D – I think I would like to say thank you for approaching us and for taking the time to help us, it's been good, its' been appreciated.

Thank you

M – thank you for being such a personable head teacher and easy to talk to, because you are, you are easy to talk to and I am gutted that you are going to be honest

Bless you thank you

Please read attached letter before completing this questionnaire.

I am interested in your views about the importance of parental support or parents working in partnership with you in order to support the needs of the child/young person. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your response will be anonymous. Please return the questionnaire to Donna Chambers via the collection box or by email to dmc.profdoc@gmail.com.

Thank you very much for your help. I will let you know what has been learnt from your feedback.

Please provide information about role.	
What is your role within the hub? (for example, health police, social care)	
My role is ...	
How many years' experience do you have in your professional role?	
Please circle or highlight your response to the following questions.	
How confident are you in working with parents to support the needs of children within this role?	1 = Not confident 5 = Very confident
	1 2 3 4 5
How often does your role require you to work with parents to support the needs of children?	1 = Not at all 5 = 5 days a week
	1 2 3 4 5

Your experience of working with parents.	
If you have needed to work with parents in order to support a child, please respond to the following (please circle or highlight your response)	
Statement	1=Definitely disagree 5=Definitely agree
All parents are keen to do the best for their children	1 2 3 4 5
Some parents do not have the skills to support their children	1 2 3 4 5
Some parents do not think it is their responsibility to support their children	1 2 3 4 5
When parents do support me and my work, the outcomes for the child are better	1 2 3 4 5
When parents do NOT support it makes reaching a positive outcome more of a challenge	1 2 3 4 5
Some young people do not want parental support	1 2 3 4 5

How much do you think parents influence outcomes for their children?	
Indicate whether you agree or disagree with EACH of the following statements (please circle/or highlight your response)	
Statement	1= Definitely disagree 5=Definitely agree
Parents play a vital role in outcomes for their children	1 2 3 4 5
Parents are part of the influence for parents, but peer pressure also plays a part	1 2 3 4 5
Children will all take different routes in life and are responsible for their own outcomes	1 2 3 4 5

Do you think that there is a relationship between parental attitude and the child's behaviour?

**(delete as appropriate)	
Parental attitude	Child attitude
If parent in pro-education	** Pro education/ anti- education
If parent is anti-education	** Pro education/ anti- education
If parent is pro-law and order	** Pro law and order/anti law and order
If parent is anti-law and order	** Pro law and order/anti law and order
If parent is pro aggression	** Pro aggression/anti aggression
If parent is anti- aggression	** Pro aggression/anti aggression
Please feel free to add any comments in relation to these statements:	

<p>Please feel free to add any additional information at this point.</p> <p>This information will help inform the overview of support to children and their families.</p>

<p>Potential improvements</p> <p>Is there anything you feel that could be done to further improve life chances for children and young people through the role of the parent?</p>

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, it is very much appreciated.

Donna Chambers

I am interested in your views about the importance of parental support or parents working in partnership with you in order to support the needs of the child/young person. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your response will be anonymous. Please return the questionnaire to Donna Chambers via the collection box or by email to dmc.profdoc@gmail.com.

Thank you very much for your help. I will let you know what has been learned from your feedback.

1. Please provide information about role.

Which area of the hub do you work (for example, health/police/social care etc)

How many years' experience do you have in this role?

How confident are you in working with parents within this role? (Change to 5 points)

- Not at all confident
- Fairly confident
- Very confident

2. How often do you need to contact/work with parents? *(place an x in the box)*

- Most days
- 2 – 3 times per week
- On average, at least once a week
- Less frequently, but more than once
- Once
- Not at all **(Change to 5 points)**

3. If not in your current role, in your previous role how often did you need to contact/work with parents? *(place an x in the box)*

- Most days
- 2 – 3 times per week
- On average, at least once a week
- Less frequently, but more than once
- Once
- Not at all **(Not needed)**

4. Your experience of working with parents.

If you have needed to work with parents in order to support a child, please respond to the following (please circle or highlight your response)

1= Definitely disagree

5=definitely agree

All parents are keen to do the best for their children	1	2	3	4	5
Some parents do not have the skills to support their children	1	2	3	4	5
Some parents do not accept responsibility for the behaviour of their children	1	2	3	4	5
When parents do support me and my work, the outcomes for the child are better	1	2	3	4	5
When parents do NOT support it makes reaching a positive outcome more of a challenge	1	2	3	4	5
Some young people do not want parental support	1	2	3	4	5

(Statements remain but needs setting out clearer)

5. How much do you think parents influence outcomes for their children?

Indicate whether you agree or disagree with EACH of the following statements
(please circle/or highlight your response)

1=Definitely disagree

5=definitely agree

Parents play a vital role in outcomes for their children	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are part of the influence for children, but peer pressure also plays a part	1	2	3	4	5
Children will all take different routes in life and are responsible for their own outcomes	1	2	3	4	5

(Statements remain but needs setting out clearer)

(Add a section on parental attitude and the impact on child's behaviour)

6. Please feel free to add any additional information at this point.

This information will help inform the overview of support to children and their families. With a particular focus on the IMPACT that this would have on the child.

7. Potential improvements

Is there anything you feel that could be done to further improve life chances for children and young people through the role of the parent?

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, it is very much appreciated.

Donna Chambers

Dear Group Managers,

Please see attached some research being undertaken by Donna Chambers. Until recently Donna was Head teacher at **[named removed]** school. Donna is now doing a PHD and her research will be helpful to us and the children and families we work with. Could I therefore ask you to please cascade this email within in your service areas, requesting that colleges return the completed questionnaire directly to Donna.

Best wishes,

[name removed]

CC Donna

[name removed]

Service Director

Youth, Families & Social Work

[Local Authority removed]

Sheet no.	Role	Years in role	confidence working with parents	Regularity of work with parents	Experience of working with parents Grading scale of 1 def agree - 5 def not agree					
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
F1	Social Care	26	5	5	3	3	3	3	4	4
F2	Social Worker	19	4	4	2	4	3	3	5	5
F3	Child and family su	9	5	5	3	3	3	3	5	5
F4	Social Worker	6 month	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	5
F5	Social Worker	2	4	4	2	5	5	5	5	5
F6	Social Care	14	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4
F7	Team manager	8	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	5
F8	Social Worker	1	4	4	4	4	5	2	5	5
F9	Social Worker		4	4	3	3	4	4	5	2
F10	Education adviser	24	4	1	4	5	3	5	5	2
F11	Social Worker	30	4	1	5	4	1	1	5	1
F12	Social Worker	19	4	5	1	1	1	1	5	2
			52	50	38	45	35	58	48	33
			4.333333333	4.166666667	3.167	3.75	2.917	4.8333	4	3
Sheet no.	Role	Influence on outcomes Grading scale as across			Relationship between parental attitude and child's relationship out of 6					
		Q1	Q2	Q3						
F1	Social Care	4	4	4	not answered and no additional comments					
F2	Social Worker	5	4	1	Difficult to answer - idea of supporting families to facilitate for themselves.					
F3	Child and family su	5	4	3	mixture of answers - CONSIDERABLE free text					
F4	Social Worker	5	4	2	Can't be generalised - accountability for parents					
F5	Social Worker	5	5	2	Can't be generalised - education for parents about DV etc the impact of it					
F6	Social Care	5	NR	3	Can't be generalised - positive choices and outcomes					
F7	Team manager	5	3	2	No comments					
F8	Social Worker	5	4	2	"child's attitudes affected by multiple influences, not solely by their parents					
F9	Social Worker	5	4	3	No comments					
F10	Education adviser	5	5	2	It isn't that simple - Good comments to include					
F11	Social Worker	5	5	4	other influential factors - comments about poverty too!					
F12	Social Worker	5	4	1	Good comments to quote.					

2016 (Historical report) Case study 1 (Boy)

School readiness
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely
Your child is always in the correct uniform
Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
Your child's homework is always complete and on time
Your child reads regularly at home
Your child practices spellings at home
Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
You attended parents evening
Thank you for your support reading at home would make a real difference.
Teacher's Comments
<p><i>Y1 Boy has been a real asset to class 3 this year as he always set an exemplary example of fantastic behaviour, this fantastic learning behaviour has contributed to him making such excellent progress in all curriculum areas.</i></p> <p><i>At the beginning of the year Y1 Boy lacked self-confidence and was often reluctant to contribute to class discussions. I can gladly say that through lots of support and positivity Y1 Boy has adopted a 'can do' attitude and now faces new challenges with vigour, often putting his hand up to contribute to class discussions. Well done Y1 Boy your confidence boost has been a pleasure to witness.</i></p> <p><i>Y1 Boy is an extremely popular member of due to his naturally friendly nature and good sense of humour, he has a large circle of friends and always has someone to play with. He is exceptionally caring and conscientious and often puts the needs of others before his own, offering advice and support to those who need it.</i></p> <p><i>I wish Y1 Boy the best of luck in Year 2.</i></p> <p>Signed: _____ (Class Teacher)</p> <p>Head Teacher's comment</p> <p><i>This is a lovely report for a super young man who is achieving well. I completely agree with everything teacher has said – it has been a pleasure to watch him grow and learn this year. As we spoke about before, your support for his spelling, reading and homework will make a real difference to his progress, please let us know if we can help you further with this.</i></p> <p><i>Y1 Boy this is a super report because you have been working really hard in class. Keep trying hard and being just who you are. Good luck in your new class. ☺</i></p> <p>Signed (Head Teacher</p>

School readiness

Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely

Your child is always in the correct uniform

Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning

Your child's homework is always complete and on time

Your child reads regularly at home

Your child practices spellings at home

Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning

You attended parents evening

Thank you for your support it is making a massive difference to your child.

Ensuring that homework is more regularly completed throughout the year, including spelling practise and reading, would make a difference to Boy's learning.

Teacher's Comments

Boy you have ensured that you try your best to understand and enjoy the learning regardless of the subject. You seem to have particularly loved all of the Year 2 learning about animals, during the 'The secret life of pets' topic. The regular visits to observe the chicks and caterpillars seemed to further your curiosity for animals and their life cycles and you were able to identify how they were changing over time. You have also been keen to care for Daisy, the pet fish, thank you for being such a kind and caring class member.

In French, you happily join in with French songs and rehearse greetings in French role play conversations with peers. You have begun to learn vocabulary for everyday words and numbers too. In history, you really enjoyed learning about the Great Fire of London and were able to create a timeline of the key events. In science, you drew carefully from observation to produce some clear, colourful diagrams of fruit and vegetables which you carefully labelled. In design technology you were keen to explore the different types of puppets and enjoyed designing and making your very own animal hand puppet.

During the summer term the Roald Dahl topic has really captured your imagination, especially the learning about the Twits and BFG stories. You enjoyed using your collage skills to create a colourful roly poly bird and a suitably scruffy Mr and Mrs Twit for the class display. I hope after leaving Year 2 you continue to enjoy the wonderful stories written by Roald Dahl.

Boy, your kind and fun loving nature means you are never short of a friend to enjoy playtime games with and are never involved in any playground controversy. You have been a fantastic role model this year for both behaviour and attitude towards learning. Well done on a successful year Boy. Wishing you all the best in Year.

Signed:

(Class teacher)

Head Teacher's comment

Boy has had a very positive year and has continued to make the most of his time in school. Your support for his learning is beginning to make a difference. He is a lovely lad and he has made steady progress this year. I have no doubt that he will continue to build upon these achievements as he moves into Year 3.

Boy, you have had a good year and I am really pleased with you. Well done 😊

Signed:

(head teacher)

2016 (Historical report) Case study 2 (Girl)

School readiness	
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely	
	Your child is always in the correct uniform
	Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
	Your child's homework is always complete and on time
	Your child reads regularly at home
	Your child practices spellings at home
	Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
	You attended parents evening
	Thank you for your support it is making a massive difference to your child.
Teacher's Comments	
<p><i>Girl has shone within Year 5 and is a well-liked and caring member of the class. Whenever she gets the opportunity her head will be nestled within a book and this is clearly where her passion lies. She is also a superb Artist who has designed some incredible pieces of Artwork especially during our Harry Potter topic. She has made excellent progress this year across all subjects and her willingness to learn new things has not gone unnoticed. She produces some incredible lengthy pieces of writing but she always ensures she has remained accurate with her use of grammar and punctuation. She has worked extremely hard this year and I wish her all the best moving up into year 6 where I am sure she will flourish!</i></p>	
Signed:	(Class Teacher)
Head Teacher's comment	
<p><i>Girl really has had an amazing year and she continues to make the most of what school life has to offer. She will regularly make my day – she is fab! As we spoke about you support for her homework, spellings etc. would make a difference and she will need this even more so when facing the challenges that Year 6 will throw her way. I adore her she is really great.</i></p>	
<p><i>Girl, where do I begin with you? You are fab, funny, entertaining, hard-working and you always have a story to tell. Well done and keep up the good work. ☺</i></p>	
Signed:	(Head Teacher)

2017 Case study 2 (Girl)

School readiness	
Green = always. Amber = sometimes. Black = rarely	
	Your child is always in the correct uniform
	Your child arrives at 8.50am every morning
	Your child's homework is always complete and on time
	Your child reads regularly at home
	Your child practices spellings at home
	Your child concentrates well showing that they are prepared for learning
	You attended parents evening
	Thank you for your support it is making a massive difference to your child.
Teacher's Comments	
<p><i>Year 6 is a huge year, both academically and emotionally, and Y6 girl hasn't missed a beat. She has been determined to overcome any obstacles and to tackle any challenges. She is a conscientious girl and she has given every task her absolute all; a fact which she should be extremely proud of. She consistently produces work to a high standard and is diligent in handing in her homework – this will stand her in good stead for secondary school.</i></p> <p><i>Y6 girl has been such a key part of our class this year and I can't imagine not having her next year! She is an absolute ray of sunshine; she's full of inquisitive questions and never fails to make us smile! She is a positive role model for her peers as well as younger children in school; particularly when it comes to showing an absolute adoration for reading – her keenness and passion for a good book most definitely rubs off on others.</i></p> <p><i>It has been an amazing final year of primary school for Y6 girl and I have been absolutely thrilled by the progress she has made across the curriculum! Since the beginning of the year she has totally transformed; gone is the quiet girl who started Year 6 and in her place is the increasingly confident, capable of anything, determined girl that we see today! I am so proud of you Y6 girl and I hope you are too! The future is very bright for Y6 girl and I know that she will succeed in whatever path she chooses to take. Good luck Y6 girl, we will miss you.</i></p>	
Signed:	(Class Teacher)
<p>Head Teacher's comment</p> <p><i>I am totally delighted with Y6 girl and her amazing attitude to learning. You should be so very proud of her achievements – she is a credit to you! Your support for her learning has been acknowledged and we thank you for that, it really does make a difference. She has been an asset to her class, the school and it has been a privilege to be her head teacher.</i></p> <p><i>Y6 girl, where do I begin with the very long list of achievements...You are an absolute star and I will always be pleased that I had the chance to be your head teacher. Keep up the good work and good luck at secondary school. Well done.</i></p>	
Signed:	(Head Teacher)

Parental Group D meetings

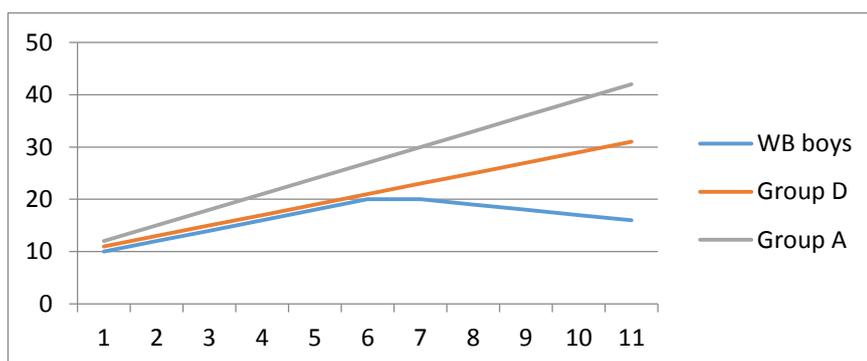
Child's Name: CASE STUDY 1

Date: 01.04.16

I met with mum and dad this morning to highlight my concerns about their lack of engagement with the younger 2 children and their schooling. I asked why this was, particularly given the fact that they are very involved in Boy A's education (who is currently in Year 6)

Shared the graph of progress with them also.

Graph of progress beyond the primary school



1. More involved with Boy A due to his dyslexia and emotional issues
2. Find one class teacher (Teacher A) unapproachable
3. They do work with the children but do not document this
4. They truly want the best for their children and were shocked with the impact it could have
5. Gave lots of examples of why they should be a group C really with Boy B, whilst accepting this is not the case with Boy C, i.e. asking questions, doing homework, attending parents evening.

Targets for improving engagement:

- To write in the home school book when they have worked with the boys
- To challenge teacher A when they have not received information
- To email questions rather than just worry about them
- To be 'creative' when working with all four children (Boy D to join us soon).

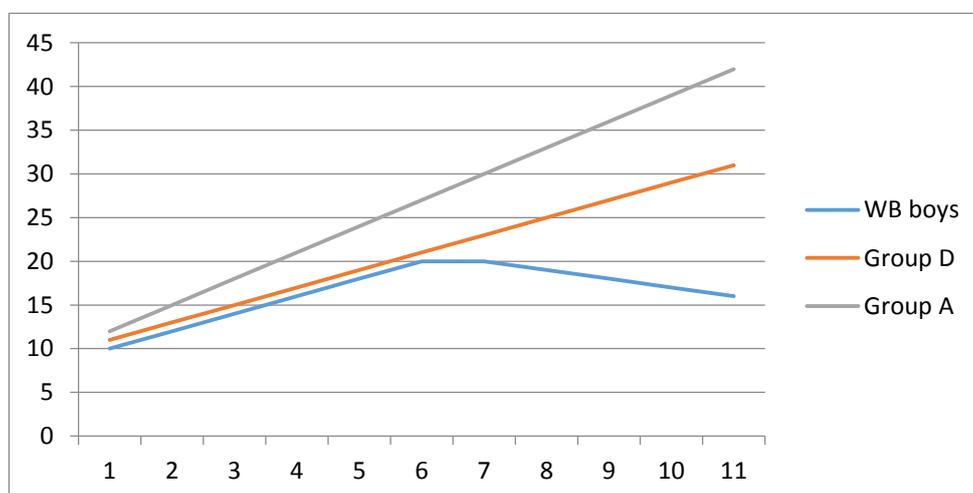
Parental Group D meetings

Child's Name: CASE STUDY 2

Date: 20.04.16

I met with mum and dad this evening, due to the fact that they were unable to make an appointment within working hours, to highlight my concerns about their lack of engagement with the girls and their schooling. Currently Girl B is making good progress in writing and is on track, Reading is slightly below but is making good progress and maths is well below and she is making steady progress. Last year she made good progress in reading and writing but less than expected progress in maths. Girl A is a very bright girl, came in to school above average and has held this. She made good progress in all areas last year and is making expected progress in all areas this year (so far) I asked what engagement with homework etc looked like at home and a lengthy discussion took place – very positive. I showed them the graph of the difference parental engagement can make with children and what this looks like when they go on to secondary school (especially boys).

Graph of progress beyond the primary school



Targets for improving engagement:

- Nobody (staff) reads the comments and we would like a response from the teacher occasionally
- Girls to bring diaries to DC for approval
- With 4 children they need a late Parent Eve appointment
- Maths for Girl B – explore dyscalculia or do detailed diagnostic work