

## Parental involvement

Moderate impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence.

+3

Parental Involvement covers the active engagement of parents in supporting their children's learning at school. This includes programmes focused on parents and their skills (such as improving literacy or IT skills), general approaches to encourage parents to support their children to read or do mathematics, and more intensive programmes for families in crisis.

### How effective is it?

Although parental involvement is consistently associated with pupils' success at school, the evidence about how to increase involvement to improve attainment is mixed and much less conclusive. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged families. There is some evidence that supporting parents with their first child will have benefits for siblings. However, there are also examples where combining parental engagement strategies with other interventions, such as extended early years provision, has not been associated with any additional educational benefit. This suggests that developing effective parental involvement to improve their children's attainment is challenging and will need careful monitoring and evaluation.

The impact of parents' aspirations is also important, though there is insufficient evidence to show that changing parents' aspirations will raise their children's aspirations and achievement over the longer term. Two recent meta-analyses from the USA suggested that increasing parental involvement in primary and secondary schools had on average 2-3 months positive impact.

### How secure is the evidence?

Although there is a long history of research into parental involvement programmes, there is surprisingly little robust evidence of the impact of programmes that have tried to increase involvement to improve learning. The association between parental involvement and a child's academic success is well established, but rigorous evaluation of approaches to improve learning through parental involvement is more sparse.

The evidence is predominantly from primary level and the early years, though there are studies which have looked at secondary schools. Impact studies tend to focus on reading and mathematics attainment.

### What are the costs?

The costs of different approaches vary enormously, from running parent workshops (about £80 per session) and improving communications, which are cheap, to intensive family support programmes with specially trained staff. The cost of a specialist community or home/school liaison teacher is about £35,000, or about 37 secondary-level Pupil Premium allocations. Costs per pupil are therefore estimated as moderate.

## What should I consider?

Before you implement this strategy in your learning environment, consider the following:

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1. Involvement is often easier to achieve with parents of very young children.
2. What approaches will you take to support parents in working with their children?
3. Have you provided a flexible approach to allow parental involvement to fit around their schedule?
4. Parents of older children may appreciate short sessions at flexible times to involve them.
5. How will you make your school welcoming for parents whose own experience of school may not have been positive?
6. Have you provided some simple, practical ways that parents can support their children in ways that do not require a high level of ability (e.g. by ensuring that students have an environment where they can work at home)?